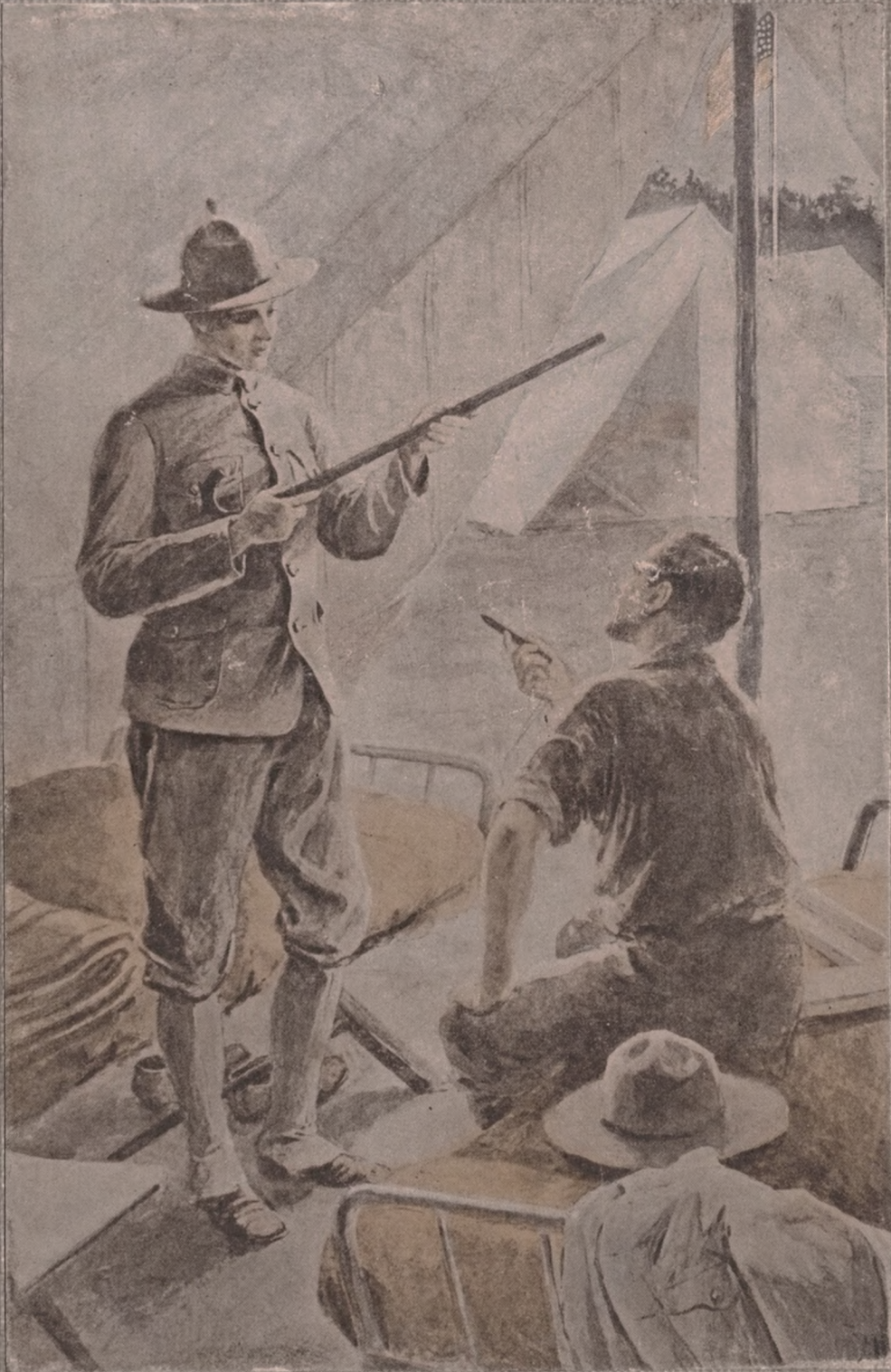


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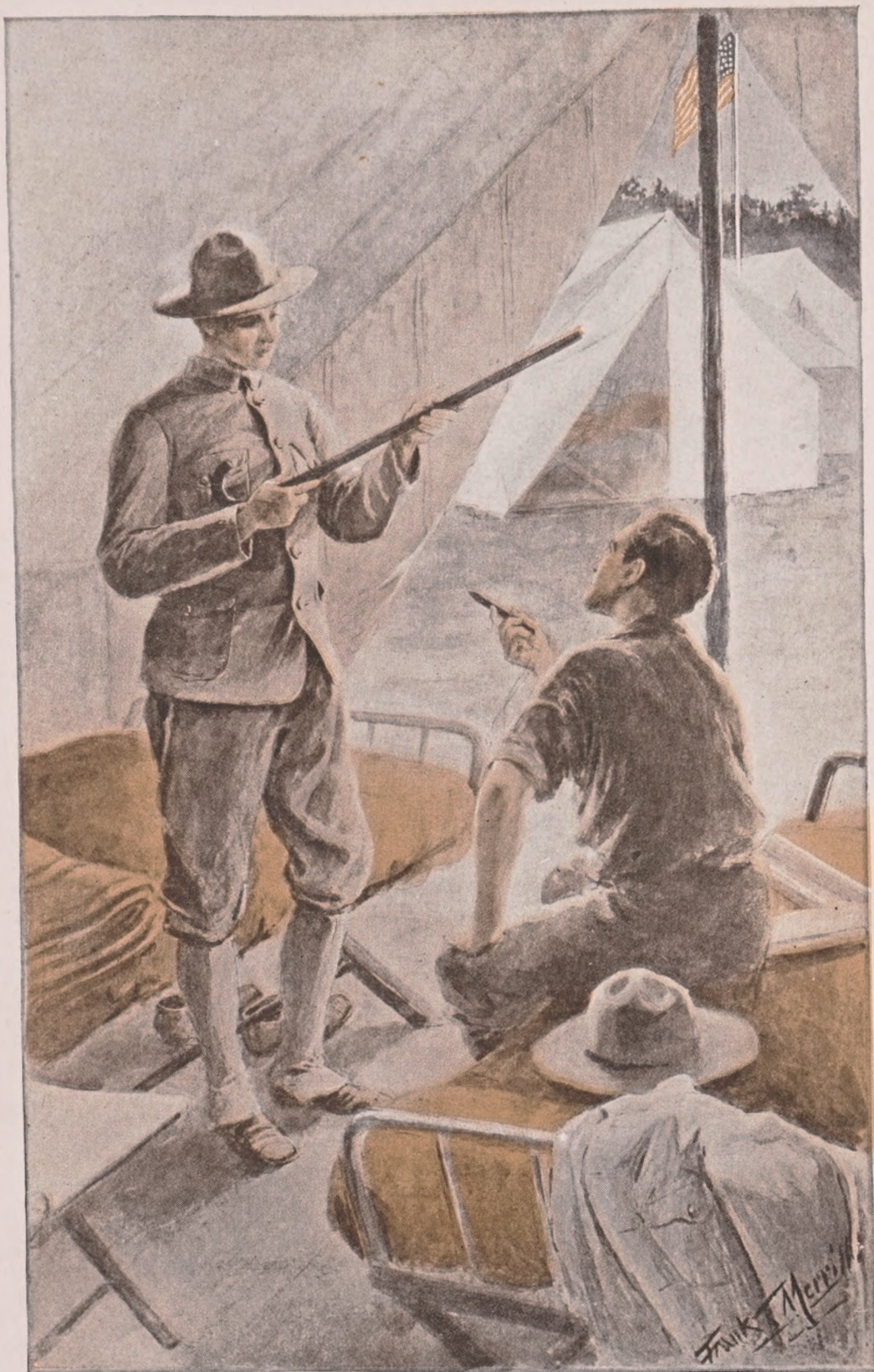
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THE HIDDEN AERIAL

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no. 11

To

Charles Lathrop Pack,

who, as president of

The National War Garden Commission,

did more, perhaps, than any other private citizen

to stimulate food production in America during the war,

This Book Is Dedicated

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The Hidden Aerial

CHAPTER I

SOLDIERS OF THE SOIL

LITTLE Johnnie Lee sat by the window of the Central City Y. M. C. A., looking gloomily at the great service flag that hung from the flagpole of the building and was lazily flapping in the breeze. Slowly he counted the stars on the big banner. The longer he stared at the flag the gloomier his look became. Finally he turned to Jimmy Donnelly, who sat beside him reading the sporting page in the daily paper.

"Ain't it tough luck?" said Johnnie.

"Eh?" said Jimmy, his eyes still fastened on the baseball news. "What's tough luck?"

"Why, to be so young, of course. If only I'd had the luck to be born a year or two sooner I could go to war."

Jimmy Donnelly lowered his paper and slowly looked his companion over from head to foot. "You little peanut," he smiled, "they wouldn't take you in the army, even if you were a million years old."

"I know it," groaned Johnnie, his face becoming more disconsolate than ever, "and that's worse than being too young. If I was as big as you, Jimmy, I'd run away and enlist and tell 'em I was eighteen years old."

Johnnie paused and looked forlornly at the service banner once more. "They'll never put a star on it for me," he said, almost tearfully, "and there ain't a fellow in Central City that's more eager to help than I am. Whenever I try to do anything they tell me either that I'm too little or that I'm too young. There just ain't a thing a little fellow like me can do. If you don't call that hard luck, what is it?"

Mr. Haskins, the Y. M. C. A. secretary, was passing as Johnnie finished speaking. He stopped, wheeled, and stepped quickly over to the window where the two boys sat.

"You could use a hoe and pull weeds, Johnnie," he said. "In fact, you'd be so close to the ground you ought to be able to pull weeds better than most anybody else."

Johnnie looked up at him with a sickly smile. "Pulling weeds would help *a lot*," he said sarcastically. "I reckon a good weed puller would be almost as useful as one of those French 'seventy-fives.'"

Mr. Haskins looked fixedly at Johnnie for a moment. "Johnnie," he said presently, "you told the

truth without meaning to tell it. That sign across the street, 'Food will win the war,' means exactly what it says. The nations fighting for freedom have hardly enough of anything. We are short of guns, munitions, flying machines, coal, lumber, steel, and a thousand other things. But the worst shortage is of food. Men are at work night and day to make these other things; but what good will they be when they are made, unless there is also sufficient food? Every day food becomes scarcer; and every day the number of men raising food gets smaller. The Allies need food raisers just now more than they need soldiers or shells or anything else. So just because you can't shoulder a musket and go into the trenches you mustn't say there is nothing for you to do. You can raise food as well as a six-footer. And just now that's of more importance than helping to handle a French 'seventy-five.' "

Johnnie looked unconvinced. "If weed pulling is so helpful," he argued, "why did Captain Hardy send for Henry and Roy and Lew and Willie to go to New York to help find the secret wireless that the Germans were using? Why didn't Uncle Sam keep them here raising radishes? "

"Johnnie," said Mr. Haskins, "Uncle Sam has need of men for all sorts of work, and he knows best where each one of us can be of the most use. Those four members of your Wireless Patrol were sent for because of their unusual skill in wireless work. If

you had been a better wireless operator than Willie Brown, who isn't a bit bigger than you are, I have no doubt you would have gone in his place. Uncle Sam didn't need you for wireless work, but he does need you to help raise food."

"But I ain't a farmer," protested Johnnie. "I don't know anything about farming."

"You know enough to use a hoe and pull weeds, Johnnie, and you can easily learn more. Uncle Sam is organizing an army of soldiers of the soil, just as he is creating an army of fighting men, and he wants every boy of your age who isn't doing something else helpful to enlist. Why don't you join the Boys' Working Reserve, Johnnie, and spend your summer on a farm? Thousands of boys in every part of the nation are enlisting. So don't say there isn't anything you can do to help. The question is whether or not you are patriotic enough to be willing to do what you are able to do, whether you like to do it or not."

The conversation had attracted a number of boys, who now clustered about the little group by the window. In addition to Johnnie Lee and Jimmy Donnelly there were several other members of the Camp Brady Wireless Patrol, as well as a number of other boys who did not belong to that little organization.

Johnnie made no reply to Mr. Haskins. He was thinking of the night, not long since passed, when

the members of the Wireless Patrol had been given a banquet by the grateful citizens of Elk City, which had been saved from destruction at the hands of German dynamiters through the efforts of the Wireless Patrol. Only a part of the Patrol had had a hand in the actual capture of the dynamiters, but Captain Hardy, the Patrol leader, in thanking the citizens of Elk City for their kindness, had said: "Doubtless the hardest task done by any members of the Wireless Patrol was that of remaining at Camp Brady and carrying on there the ordinary affairs of every-day life. Had a single member of the Patrol failed in the task assigned to him, we should never have saved Elk City from destruction."

Johnnie knew that his captain's words were true; and he also knew that what Mr. Haskins had said was true. He understood well enough that the way to win the war was for each individual American to do with his might what his hands found to do. The difficulty was that the task now suggested was so commonplace — merely the wielding of a hoe and the pulling of weeds — and Johnnie had been doing the commonplace for so long that his heart yearned for a part in something more spectacular. He had been one of the boys who remained at Camp Brady while his fellows trailed and captured the dynamiters. And now, while others of his comrades were in the great American metropolis on an exciting spy hunt, he must remain in the humdrum town of his

birth and pull weeds, or at best go into the country where it was still more humdrum, and do the same thing. In the end, Johnnie knew, he would sign up as a hoe man; he was too good a patriot not to be willing to do the best he could. But for the moment he rebelled at the part that Nature, in making him small, had laid out for him. So he remained silent.

Nor was Johnnie the only lad in the group who looked with scornful eye on the suggestion to join the Boys' Working Reserve for farm service. The plea for recruits had been duly made by the high school principal, but as yet no recruits had been secured. The main reason for this was the scornful opposition of Frank Anderson. This lad, handsome in features and with a dashing manner, was the recognized leader among the high school boys. He was the son of the richest manufacturer in town. The possession of plenty of spending money together with his aristocratic bearing had given him great influence among his fellows. But he was arrogant, conceited, and inordinately ambitious. And yet he combined with these qualities real ability and cleverness.

Just as Frank had made fun of the idea on the day the high school principal had explained the plan for the Boys' Working Reserve, so now he was outspoken in his hostility to it.

"If Uncle Sam needs boys to work on the farms," he demanded defiantly, "why doesn't he provide proper equipment for them? Who's going to work

for some tight-fisted old hayseed twelve hours a day, and sleep in a hot garret, and eat greasy fried potatoes and salt ham at every meal, for twenty dollars a month? Not I, nor any other boy with any sense. I can go into my father's office and earn that much in a week, and have a good time besides. This talk about being 'soldiers of the soil' is just bunk to catch a lot of suckers."

Mr. Haskins was about to reply, when a tall, rangy lad who bore his name but was no kin of his, stepped forward. The lad's threadbare clothes were in striking contrast to the expensive garments worn by the son of the banker. On his face was a look of quiet determination that spoke of complete self-mastery.

"Not all of us feel that way, Mr. Haskins," he said quietly. "The men who go into the army don't go because it is an easy job or because it pays well. Lots of men give up big salaries to take places in the ranch at thirty dollars a month. If they are willing to do that, and to risk their lives as well, the least we boys can do is to back them up in whatever way we can help the best. Uncle Sam needs us on the farms more than he needs us anywhere else or he wouldn't have asked us to work there. We ought to be thinking of how we can help the nation best and not how we can get the most fun or the most money."

Lem Haskins spoke quietly but with a ring of

determination in his voice that found an echo in the hearts of most of his hearers. As he talked, he looked squarely at Frank Anderson, who reddened slightly and moved uneasily, while his face took on an angry look. It was a new experience for him to be reproved in this fashion. But Lem gave him no chance to reply.

"I had a letter from Captain Hardy this morning," he continued. "He has heard that there are no recruits in Central City for the Boys' Working Reserve, and he wants the members of the Wireless Patrol and as many others as will go with us to enlist for farm work. I've got an offer of a job at twelve dollars a week and I need the money; but I'm going to work on a farm. How many of you will join me?" And he looked appealingly around the group.

There was a pause. Then Mr. Haskins spoke. "Lem," he said with approval, "you are doing a real patriotic service, and every boy in the room is going to join you. There isn't a boy here who can afford not to."

He paused and glanced about the group. Plainly there was a division of sentiment. The boys of the Wireless Patrol were evidently with Lem. Their attitude was settled the instant they learned that Captain Hardy wished them to enlist for farming. But some of the others seemed to hesitate. The followers of Frank Anderson were waiting to see what

their leader would say. Frank's face wore a scornful smile, but before he could say anything, Mr. Haskins spoke again.

"Of course," he explained, "no one is going to try to compel any of you to do farm work. The matter is one for each of you to settle for himself. But I think you will all join, for I know you boys pretty well, and I do not believe there is a boy in the group that is yellow. It takes a good red-blooded boy to do what Lem is doing. How many of you are going to join him?"

"I am," said Jimmy Donnelly.

"Me, too," cried Alec Cunningham and Robert Martin in a breath, while George Larkin called out, "You can't lose me. I'm in on it." All three were members of the Wireless Patrol.

For a moment there was a pause. Every member of the Wireless Patrol had volunteered except Johnnie Lee. Mr. Haskins turned to him and said, "Here's the chance you wanted, Johnnie."

"No it ain't," said Johnnie, "but I'm going to take it anyway. If pulling weeds is all I can do I'll pull weeds till my back breaks. I may be little, but I'm not yellow."

"Nor here either," cried George Fletcher. "Count me in."

George was a big boy and stood high in his classes and was so well liked that a half dozen other boys followed him at once. Only the Anderson crowd

held back. But soon their ranks were broken, for Roger Branscome stepped forward and joined the volunteers. He was quickly followed by Clarence Westervelt. Both were sons of wealthy and aristocratic parents, and Clarence was hardly second to Frank Anderson in influence among his fellows.

The latter, seeing how things were going, and sensing the unfortunate position he would occupy if he did not change his attitude, suddenly called out: "I've been thinking it over, Mr. Haskins, and you are right. You may count me in, too." But there was no ring of sincerity in his voice.

Every boy in the group had now expressed his willingness to serve as a soldier of the soil. Mr. Haskins smiled with pleasure at the change in heart.

"Boys," he said with a smile, "I want to tell you that you have shown the proper spirit. Perhaps some of you still feel as Johnnie did — that helping to raise food is a poor way to assist your country. But you are wrong. Lieutenant-Governor McClain has just issued an appeal to the boys of the state to enlist for this service, and here is what he says."

From his pocket he pulled the morning newspaper, ran his eye hastily over the pages, and finally began to read: "I know that you boys are patriotic. I know that you want to give your country more than 'lip service' in this emergency. Some of you, no doubt, have brothers in the service, and I feel sure that you want to put food into the stomach, strength

into the arm, and more hope and courage into the heart of that brother 'over there' and the fellow that's fighting beside him, if a little sacrifice of pleasure during the summer months, and a little leg-tire, and a little backache on your part will bring it about. And there's one place you can help better than any other place in the world, outside of carrying a gun, yes, just as well as if you were carrying a gun, and that on a farm. All authorities agree that 'food will win the war,' and it necessarily follows that the fellow who trudges the furrows is equally a patriot with the fellow who answers the drum beat."

Mr. Haskins paused as he put the paper back in his pocket. "That," he continued, "is what the Lieutenant-Governor of this great state of Pennsylvania thinks about service on the farm. I congratulate you boys, for every one of you has declared himself ready to do the thing your country needs, regardless of the sacrifices entailed."

But the volunteer farmers soon found it was one thing to enlist and another thing to get into the army of the soil. The local leaders of the Boys' Working Reserve were communicated with, enlistment papers were secured, and the boys prepared to "sign up." Then it was found that enlistment was limited strictly to boys of desirable character. Shirkers were not wanted. Now the high school principal became the arbiter of destiny. Five of the boys who had volunteered were rejected because of their poor rec-

ords at school. Not one of the Camp Brady boys was among the five. Two of Frank Anderson's followers were among those rejected. But Roger Branscome and Clarence Westervelt and Frank himself were given a good rating by their teacher.

The fact that only boys of worth would be accepted as members of the farm army made membership in that body seem suddenly much more desirable; and a number of boys who had previously stood aloof from the movement now wanted to join. But the party was complete and no more volunteers were needed from the Central City district.

As the group was finally made up, it consisted of the seven members of the Wireless Patrol and an equal number of boys who did not belong to that organization. Lem Haskins was, of course, the leader of the Patrol Group, for he was second lieutenant in that organization, and the only officer now in Central City. Frank Anderson at once became the leader of the other seven boys. Thus the party immediately split into two distinctive groups, and if there was not actual hostility between the two parties, there was at least an open feeling of coldness between them. This feeling Frank Anderson apparently encouraged, though for what purpose was not at once apparent. But that he had some scheme in mind nobody doubted. He had been put in an unenviable light and really beaten; and a boy as poor and obscure as Lem Haskins had brought him this

first fall in his ambitious young life. No one who knew him believed that he would either forget or forgive; but what he would do to even up his score with Lem nobody knew.

But for a time no one gave the matter much thought, for the farm volunteers were to go to the State College of Agriculture for a course in the rudiments of farming, before beginning their actual labors, and every boy was busy getting ready for this trip, which promised greatly to enliven what all had regarded as at best an uninteresting enterprise.

CHAPTER II

OFF TO THE FARM PLATTSBURG

BUSY, indeed, were the days that followed. Seventy-two hours from the time of their enlistment, the volunteers were to reach the training camp at the Pennsylvania State College. Meantime they had to get their equipments together and say good-bye to their friends, for none of them expected to return to Central City until the summer was past; and one or two of them had to persuade reluctant parents to allow them to undertake the work. But soon all difficulties were overcome and the lads, now duly enrolled as members of the United States Boys' Working Reserve, were as busy as bees preparing for their departure.

The burning question among them was, "What shall we take with us?" Instructions from the Working Reserve officers said that each boy should bring to the training camp everything that he expected to take with him to the farm on which he would work. It was suggested that at least the following articles would be necessary: Two working

shirts; a hat; one pair of heavy working shoes; three pairs of socks; two suits of underwear; one pair of pajamas; two face towels; one bath towel; two heavy blankets suitable for camp use; one sweater; and necessary toilet articles, such as soap, comb, and tooth-brush and paste. It was also suggested that musical instruments and baseball outfits be taken. But to lads who had never lived in the country and who had little idea of what was really needed there, such an outfit seemed painfully inadequate. Each boy wanted to take a hundred different things not mentioned.

The hat and the working shirt were to form part of the uniform; for all the lads at the training camp were to be supplied with uniforms belonging to the state. These uniforms consisted, of course, of hats, coats, trousers, and leggings; but inasmuch as coats would not be worn during work, the shirts would also form part of the uniform. These, it was announced, could be bought at State College at cost, as could also the hats.

The Y. M. C. A. continued to be the meeting-place for the embryo farmers; and the corner by the window, where Johnnie had sat lamenting his fate, was usually filled with a noisy throng discussing the coming camp.

It soon became evident to the volunteers what part Frank Anderson intended to play in the adventure before them.

"My tailor is rushing work on a uniform of officers' cloth for me," he said in one of these discussions. "None of your common soldier khaki for mine. And I hope you fellows don't intend to take old shirts. You can get new ones there for next to nothing that match the uniforms. I don't want my company to look like a crowd of ragamuffins."

Lem was one of the Reserve boys present when Frank said this. He paled a trifle and a look of distress passed swiftly over his face. For half an hour he had been seated in the corner in a brown study; and the very matter he had been turning over in his mind was this question of uniform shirts. Lem had no money with which to buy anything, no matter how cheap it might be. Like any other lad of his years, Lem wanted to be as fittingly dressed as his fellows. But he could see no way to obtain the coveted garments. He had no money in hand; there was no time for him to earn the money, and he did not want to borrow the sum necessary. The only way he could see out of his difficulty was to take with him some old brown shirts he had had for years. They were patched and plainly showed their age; but they almost matched in color the material used in the soldiers' uniforms.

Big-hearted Jimmy Donnelly chanced to be looking at Lem as Frank Anderson was speaking. He noted the expression of Lem's face and rightly guessed the cause of it.

"Lem," he said, "I've been thinking about this very thing — whether to buy new shirts or take old ones. I've got some that would answer."

"I was thinking about shirts, too," said Lem, slowly. "But I wasn't debating whether I should take old ones or buy new. I haven't any money to get new ones, Jimmy. If only I could have worked for a couple of weeks at that job, I'd have had plenty of money."

For the first time Jimmy realized what it meant to Lem to give up this job and go out on a farm for twenty dollars a month. All the other boys in the Wireless Patrol had at least comfortable homes, and several of them were sons of well-to-do parents. Lem not only had no father, but even had to help support his mother. The two had very little to live on. A wave of loyalty and sympathy for Lem passed through Jimmy's big heart. But Jimmy was too much of a diplomat to hurt Lem still further by expressing his sympathy directly. Instead he said, "I don't see why we should have to buy new shirts just to please Frank Anderson. I've got some old brown flannel shirts at home that would do, and if you are not going to buy new ones, neither will I. We'll wear our old ones, Lem, and save the money."

Nor did Jimmy let the matter end here. He talked to the other members of the Wireless Patrol and told them about Lem; and every one of them loyally declared that he, too, would wear old shirts.

It was less easy to decide what other articles should be taken. But one by one, each boy put down the number of articles he deemed necessary until each could pack his baggage, barring his blankets, within the limits of a bulging suit case. His blankets each boy was to carry in a roll about his shoulders.

Finally came the day and hour of departure, and the little company marched to the station, each with his blanket roll about his shoulder and his suit case in his hand. Again the division in the ranks became perfectly evident; for the Camp Brady boys, accustomed to drill, instinctively fell in together and marched smartly in old-time formation, while the others formed a second group that straggled along in no particular order. A large company of friends and relatives was at the station to bid good-bye to the young patriots. Farewells were said, and the youthful volunteers swung aboard the train.

As Lem quietly marshalled his followers, he could not help thinking of that morning, years before, when he had left Central City with those same comrades for his first visit to Camp Brady. As he thought of all that had happened in the meantime and what it had meant to him — of how he was now actually leader of these same lads who on that occasion had hardly tolerated his presence — a great lump came into his throat. Quietly he mounted the steps of the train behind his comrades and silently

slipped into a seat beside Jimmy Donnelly. Just now his heart was full of gratitude to Jimmy.

Last of all, Frank Anderson boarded the train. In his new uniform and with his patrician features and proud bearing, he at once attracted general attention. Seeing that all eyes were on him, he walked through the aisle with the bearing of a commander, scrutinizing his companions critically.

"Put your suit case in the rack overhead," he said sternly to little Johnnie Lee. Then he sought an unoccupied seat where he would be conspicuous and sat down by himself. He had no baggage to bother with. One of his father's servants had brought his luggage to the train and put it aboard the baggage-car.

For two hours the train sped through a region of mountains and valleys and swift rushing streams. Then it stopped at Lemont and the boys crowded into the waiting motor-cars that were to take them the three miles to the State College. A few minutes later their cars swung into a beautiful grove of trees, sped along a winding roadway that ran through the college campus, and drew up before "Old Main," a towering building of gray limestone, surmounted by a lofty cupola. Here they were to register.

Not knowing exactly what to do, the company hesitated before entering the building. At once Frank Anderson stepped toward the open door.

"This way, fellows," he said, and led the way into the building.

To the attendants who met them in the hall Anderson said, with great assurance, "I want to register this company of Reserves. We are from Central City."

"Are you in charge of them?" asked the attendant, noticing that Frank was in uniform.

"Not exactly — not yet," said Frank, slightly taken aback. "But I belong to the company."

Jimmy Donnelly overheard the remark. "What do you think of that?" he said to Johnnie Lee. "He ain't in charge of us — yet. You bet he ain't. And he ain't a going to be, either."

In another minute the boys were lined up before a clerk, where each was duly registered for training at the "Farm Plattsburg."

Like Mount Zion, this farm Plattsburg was beautiful for situation. A thousand acres of farming land constituted the training ground where these youthful soldiers of the soil were to be whipped into shape to render effective help to the country's food producers. The campus proper consisted of acres and acres of beautiful wooded lawns, with excellent gravel roadways winding here and there, and dozens of buildings, great and small, located in little groups. Experimental gardens and orchards and nurseries fringed the campus. Surrounding this inner region was a broad belt of college farming land, dotted with groups of farm buildings and consisting of rolling fields and snug patches of woodland. Mountains

hemmed the valley in on either side, and directly opposite one edge of the broad college lands Tussey Mountain came to an abrupt end, its treeless nose, smooth as a sheep's back, sloping green and beautiful down to the plain.

The training camp was located on a vast, open lawn or drill ground that faced this mountain. Here, with the wooded campus behind it and before it open fields stretching all the way to Old Tussey, stood the tents that for the next fortnight were to be home to the lads from Central City. There were tents for more than three hundred boys. Row upon row, in stiff military alignment and with wide company streets between the rows, the tents formed a little city by themselves. There was a company street for each of the ten companies that were to form the regiment—and at the head of each company street stood an officer's tent. Each of the tents for privates was large enough for two occupants. The tents for officers were somewhat larger. While at the other end of the company streets stood tents larger still that could be used for mess tents and purposes of assemblage. One of these tents was occupied by the camp Y. M. C. A. The camp flagpole stood in the centre of the row of officers' tents, where were grouped four tents for the high command. Close beside these tents, which formed the camp headquarters, stood a huge sign, which read:

THE HIDDEN AERIAL

Department of Labor
U. S. Boys' Working Reserve
Penna. Division

PENN STATE
FARM
TRAINING CAMP

Committee of Public Safety
for
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

As the boys came from the Registrar's office and marched through the beautiful campus, they could see through the trees the white tents shining in the sunlight. At the sight a thrill ran through the heart of little Johnnie. The work that lay before him he suddenly beheld in a new light. It was true that the gleaming tents and the bugle calls and uniforms did not alter by one whit the service he had promised to render to his country; but they did enable Johnnie to see it from a new point of view. Now he understood that the term "soldier of the soil" really meant something, and that they who produce the materials of war serve as truly as those who use them. And suddenly he became as eager to be a wielder of the hoe as originally he had been reluctant.

Nor was this sudden spirit of devotion peculiar to Johnnie. Other hearts besides his thrilled with the thought of service to country — every heart, perhaps, with the exception of Frank Anderson's. He

was thinking, not how he might best serve the nation, but how he would most surely promote himself. The idea of service had had no part in making him a member of the boys' land army. A sense of shame had compelled him to volunteer; but having enlisted, he meant to turn events to his own use. And with Frank Anderson that meant making himself the leader. His care had ever been less about what he attempted than concerning his own prominence in the movement. To rule or ruin had been his disposition from childhood. So now, as the little squad marched through the beautiful grove, he was bending his thoughts solely upon the problem of his own advancement, while most of his fellows were thinking as resolutely upon how they could best serve the great cause for which their country was at war.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST DAY AT PENN STATE

IT was not to the distant tents, gleaming white through the trees, however, that the little band of volunteers took its way, but to the wide-spreading armory, beautiful now in its mantle of verdant vines. Swiftly they marched through the great, arched doorway, and in another moment found themselves on the edge of the huge drill floor. The hum of many voices that came to them through the doorway swelled into a very torrent of sound as they entered the building. Surprised, almost dumbfounded, the recruits from Central City paused to survey the scene before them.

At Old Main and on the march to the armory they had seen groups of boys like themselves, who had evidently come to attend the agricultural training camp that was to open on the morrow. But they were utterly unprepared for the sight that now met their eyes. Dozens, scores, even hundreds of boys were packed within the great building. Some stood in little groups, talking quietly among themselves. Some were rushing about looking for missing

comrades and lustily calling their names. Other boys were joking among themselves and shouting across the floor at one another. The great building rang and echoed with laughter and the babel of voices. Everywhere there was bustle and activity. From the academic quiet of the campus the lads from Central City seemed suddenly to have stepped into a very volcano of sound.

But they were not allowed much time for observation. A guide standing just within the door, seeing them pause, stepped over to them and said brusquely, "Go over there and get your uniforms," and he pointed to a great counter piled high with khaki clothing.

"This way," said Frank Anderson, the instant the guide stopped speaking; and he led the way to the counter, shouldering his way through the crowd so roughly that more than one jostled lad turned to scowl at him.

"Uniforms for this bunch," he said arrogantly, as he came up to the man in charge of the uniforms.

George Fletcher was immediately behind Frank. The man at the counter swiftly ran his eye over the lad, then pulled a uniform from the pile and handed it to him. George started to try on the coat, but the man waved him on.

"Hustle along and do that later," he said. "Next."

The boys immediately behind George pushed forward in a group.

"Give me a thirty-six," said Roger Branscome, seeing what had happened to George. "I don't want some old thing that won't fit."

"Give me a thirty-four," cried Clarence Westervelt.

"A thirty-six for mine," said another voice.

As the group pressed close around the man who was distributing the suits, he said with irritation, "Stand back, can't you? How do you think I'm going to fit you if you crowd so I can't see you?"

Close behind the boys who were pressing the uniform man stood Lem. At this protest he stepped back swiftly and turned to his fellows of the Wireless Patrol.

"Form in single file," he said quietly, "and give the man plenty of room."

The others continued to swarm about the man at the uniform counter, but Lem's little band marched up in perfect order and silently took the uniforms that were handed to them. Then Lem led them to one side, where they could not block the road of those who were behind them.

A slender, black-haired man in uniform stood nearby, apparently appraising the arriving volunteers. He smiled his approval as Lem so quietly created order in the line, and turned to scrutinize him closely as Lem walked away. Johnnie Lee was the only one in the group who noticed the officer, and Johnnie was so unfamiliar with uniforms that, though he realized

the man was an officer, he had no idea what his rank might be.

Making their way to an open space beside the wall, the boys began to try on the coats of the uniforms that had been given them. George Fletcher had drawn a coat three sizes too big for him. It fitted like a meal sack. Clarence Westervelt's coat, on the contrary, was too tight for him. Lem's coat looked as though it had been made for his younger brother. Like Ichabod Crane, his hands dangled a mile out of his sleeves, and the tail of his coat came up nearly to his waist. Lem had to struggle hard to get into the garment, and a roar of laughter went up when at last he succeeded. He could not even button the coat. Lem joined in the laugh on himself. But his difficulties were as nothing compared to those of little Johnnie Lee. The uniforms in question had been the property of the Pennsylvania National Guard before that organization was federalized, and the coats were made for men. Even the smallest coat available would have been too large for Johnnie and he had drawn one of good size. The sleeves completely hid his hands, the coat tail reached nearly to his knees, and the garment itself was big enough to wrap around him twice. Little Johnnie looked at himself ruefully while his fellows roared with laughter.

"That fellow didn't look blind," said Alec Cunningham, "but he was. I don't see why they

employ him. They might just as well put the suits in a grab-bag. We'd all be fitted just as well."

Indeed if the experience of Lem and Johnnie was a fair criterion, they would have been fitted better; for the appearance of both boys was greatly improved by the exchange of garments.

For a few minutes the dignified old armory resembled a second-hand clothes shop on Baxter Street. On every part of the big floor, boys were trading coats, with no end of laughter and fun resulting from the exchange. And nothing could have been planned that would better have served the purpose of making the boys from different sections acquainted with one another; for when a recruit could not get a coat to fit by exchanging with one of his immediate friends, he went through the throng seeking to make a trade with a stranger. So everybody was shouting or talking at once, and the building resounded with merry laughter. Everybody appeared happy and good-natured.

Yet there was one exception, one boy out of harmony with the spirit of good-will and friendly banter, and that boy was Frank Anderson. With ill-concealed contempt he watched the exchange of garments. And when he noticed, during this trading, that Lem and his fellows were not buying the smart new shirts that were on sale at a table near the uniform counter, he gave up all attempt at concealment of his feelings.

"For heaven's sake," he exclaimed scornfully, "I hope you fellows aren't going to disgrace Central City by wearing those old clothes. Why, every other boy in the regiment has got a new shirt."

And what he said was pretty nearly true.

"It ain't the shirt that counts," said Jimmy Donnelly. "It's what the fellow does that's inside the shirt. And anyway, I reckon they wore worse things than these shirts at Valley Forge."

Frank's reply was an expression of open contempt. Jimmy Donnelly laughed. He did not like Frank. And presently he looked sharply at him and said pointedly, "Fine feathers don't always make fine birds, you know."

Frank Anderson's face darkened at this shot, but before he could think of any retort, an order was shouted through a megaphone for the boys to line up in military formation. Each company was to be made up, so far as possible, of boys from a common locality. Thus the boys from Central City were to remain together. They had been assigned to Company B.

"All those assigned to Company A step this away," shouted a voice through the megaphone.

At once there was a great stir as the boys appointed to that company pushed their way to the front of the building.

Again the megaphone roared forth an order. "Company B will form in line immediately behind Company A. This way, Company B."

At once the boys from Central City began to push through the crowd, and once more Frank Anderson shoved his way to the front. Boys from other parts of the room also moved forward, until the entire company of more than thirty boys were massed in a group behind A Company, which was already drawn up in line. With friendly interest the lads from Central City looked at the other members of their company. The fourteen Central City boys apparently formed the largest group among the boys who were to compose Company B. But taken together the other members of the company would outnumber them considerably. Robert Martin caught sight of a boy with whom he had traded coats and called a greeting to him. Some friendly remarks were exchanged, but the making of acquaintanceships had to wait for a later time.

An officer in the uniform of a captain strode up to the group. "Fall in behind Company A," he said, and began to draw up the boys in a straight line, arranging them according to height. Thus Lem's little group was split up and its members placed here and there in the line according to size.

While Company B was forming, the call rang out for Company C. And when that unit was organized, Company D was called. Rapidly Companies E, F, G, H, I, and J were formed.

At last the regiment stood aligned on the floor. The ten companies, each of more than thirty men,

now formed into two battalions of five companies each, and presented an imposing array. No mean assemblage was this unit of the boys' land army. And every boy present realized that if the boys in all parts of the nation were thus assembling, the result would be the mobilization of a tremendous force. Hoe wielding now appeared very far from contemptible. The Colonel, the two Majors in charge of the two battalions, the ten Captains heading the ten companies, and the Lieutenants assisting them were stationed permanently at the training camp.

When the young soldier-farmers were at last drawn up in order, the Colonel and his Adjutant passed slowly down the ranks to inspect the new troops, and Johnnie Lee noted with surprise that the Colonel was the man who had been watching them at the uniform counter. As the Colonel reached Company B, the Captain stepped forward and saluted.

After the Colonel had answered the salute, the Captain said, "Colonel Dennis, I am without a lieutenant, that officer having just been summoned to Plattsburg."

"Possibly there is a boy in your company who is qualified to serve in that position," suggested the Colonel.

Here was the opportunity Frank Anderson had been waiting for. Swiftly he stepped forward and

saluted as he had seen his captain do. Drawing himself up very erectly, he said, "Perhaps I can be of use in that capacity."

He held himself very straight. He was well set up, with an appearance of strength and virility. In his trim, new uniform he looked every inch an officer. Almost any one would have been favorably impressed by the lad's appearance. Even his cold face seemed to fit in well with the idea of military sternness. Colonel Dennis looked at him with interest. He liked the boy's bearing.

"Have you had any military training?" he asked.

Frank hesitated. "N — not exactly," he replied.

The Colonel frowned disapprovingly. He did not like that sort of a reply. "Has any one in this company had any military training?" he demanded, turning away from Frank. "If so, let him advance one pace."

From their places at different points in the line the Camp Brady boys stepped out almost as one. The Colonel glanced from face to face and his eye rested on Lem. He recognized him at once as the boy he had seen at the uniform counter.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Lem Haskins, sir."

"Where do you come from?"

"Central City, sir."

"Where did you receive your military training?"

"As a member of the Camp Brady Wireless

Patrol," said Lem. "We were drilled by Captain James Hardy, now of the United States Army."

"You don't mean that you belonged to that little band of boys who recently saved Elk City from destruction by dynamiters, do you?"

"Yes, sir, we all do," said Lem, motioning towards his fellows of the Wireless Patrol.

There was a great stir in the ranks as the identity of the seven Central City boys became known. Every pair of eyes in the company was focussed on the lads, and the boys in other companies turned their heads and stretched themselves to get a look at them.

"So you had a hand in capturing those dynamiters, eh?" said the Colonel, eyeing Lem with evident admiration.

"No, sir," said Lem. "I had no part in capturing them. I was one of the boys left behind to tend camp."

"So they left you behind," said the Colonel. "I should think they would have needed a big boy like you when a fight with such desperate fellows as those German spies was in prospect."

Lem was silent. The Colonel looked Lem over narrowly. Evidently he was unfavorably impressed by his part in the Elk City affair. While the Colonel was hesitating, little Johnnie Lee broke the silence.

"Lem was in charge of the camp," he said impulsively. "He's a lieutenant of the Patrol."

The Colonel frowned, then laughed. "You must learn to salute before addressing an officer," he said.

"That's all right," said little Johnnie. "I didn't mean anything. But you musn't get a wrong idea about Lem. He was needed at camp. Captain Hardy couldn't be there and somebody had to take charge and be responsible for things."

This time the Colonel laughed outright. "You are a very loyal friend, at any rate," he said. "You can learn military drill by practice, but loyalty to friends is something that doesn't come through training. Now tell me one thing more. Why did any of you remain behind when a spy hunt was on foot?"

"Don't you know?" said little Johnnie, with such honest surprise that everybody within hearing laughed. "We were doing the wireless work for the district commander of the National Guard. Somebody had to be in camp all the time."

The Colonel turned again to Lem. "So you are a wireless operator," he said, "and a lieutenant as well," and now he spoke with approval in his voice.

"Every boy in the Patrol is a wireless operator, sir," said Lem.

Again there was a craning of necks in the ranks.

"I begin to understand why you were left in camp," said the Colonel. "I think you are the very boy for this place. I congratulate you."

He saluted Lem, who turned red with embarrass-

ment and cast his eyes on the floor, after saluting in return. Then, turning to the Captain, Colonel Dennis said, "I congratulate you, too. You seem to have a lieutenant ready-made and an extremely talented company." Then he passed on down the regiment.

At his Captain's command, Lem took the lieutenant's position. Frank Anderson slipped back into the ranks, his face red with mortification, his heart black with anger. Twice now he had been thwarted by Lem Haskins, a mere nobody, an obscure son of a widow, a ragamuffin with a patched shirt. Fierce hatred sprang up in Frank's heart, and his active mind at once turned to thoughts of vengeance.

When the Colonel's inspection was completed, the regiment passed from the armory, marched swiftly through the wooded campus and across the wide drill ground to the little city of tents. Each of the tents for privates held two occupants. Tent mates were chosen and tents assigned. As a lieutenant, Lem would occupy an officer's tent at the head of his company street. Thus he was separated from his fellows.

Soon afterward instructions were issued regarding the manner of caring for the tents. The sides of the tents were to be rolled up in fair weather so that air and sunshine could penetrate within each tent. Blankets were to be folded and hung outside in the sun. On the wooden floor within each tent stood

two army cots. These were to be kept in precisely the positions in which the boys found them, exactly so far from the front and the side walls of the tent. So narrow was the space separating the cots, for the tents were small, that it was necessary to keep everything in exact order. Each suit case was to be placed under the foot of a cot, with extra shoes against it, the toes turned out and protruding slightly from under the end of the cot. Other luggage was to be stowed snugly under the cots, while extra clothing was to be hung on a rope under the ridge of the tent.

The boys were told that an inspection would be made daily of each tent, and that each day the company that kept its tents and company street in best order would be rewarded by having an American flag float over the captain's tent at the head of the winning street. The company making the best record for orderliness for the entire training period would be awarded a blue ribbon at the close of the camp.

The day was well advanced by the time the boys had been assigned to their tents and had their duffel stowed away in regulation fashion. As they swarmed into the company streets after putting their tents in order, a bugle call floated through the air — a call that was to be very welcome in the days to come, for it was the call to mess. Awkwardly the regiment formed in line on the drill ground and marched to McAllister Hall, where meals were to be served.

After supper the boys wandered in groups through the beautiful grove during the early twilight, scanning their surroundings and becoming acquainted with the region that for the next fortnight was to be their home. Then, as the day grew dim, and the robins were piping their vesper songs in the trees, the regiment assembled again, this time in Old Main. Here they were welcomed to Penn State by President Sparks. For half an hour he talked to them of the war and what it meant, not only to the nation, but to humanity as well.

"Never before," said he, "has it been possible for boys of your age to take such a vital part in so momentous a struggle as you boys are privileged to take. In all previous wars, boys, like women, could only stay at home and wait, while the men did the fighting. If it is true, as Milton says, that 'they also serve who only stand and wait,' how much more truly do they serve who labor while they wait. And you boys, by your labor, are to produce the fundamental munition, food, upon which victory is based. Without the necessary food victory is impossible; and in the present state of the country there are not enough farmers to produce sufficient food to insure victory. The addition the boys of America will make to the food supply by their labor, I believe, will be great enough to tip the scales on our side. When the true history of this fight for freedom and justice is written, the part played by the loyal-hearted members of the

Boys' Working Reserve will be seen in its true light. The service that may seem slight to you is in reality as important and essential as the duty done by the men in the trenches.

"I congratulate you, every one of you, upon your devotion to your country. My sincerest wish is that, like your brothers in khaki in the trenches of Europe, you also will 'carry on' here in the furrows of freedom."

Once before little Johnnie had heard that phrase, "They also serve who only stand and wait." It was what their captain had told those who kept the camp after the taking of the dynamiters at Elk City. Now Johnnie began to see that it was true — that every member of an organization, whether it is a company of soldiers or a nation, has his particular part to play if success is to be gained, even though that part consists of nothing more than standing in wait for orders. Now, indeed, Johnnie saw that he had been in error when he told Mr. Haskins that there was nothing he could do. He knew better now. He had found his job, "his bit." Pulling weeds might be commonplace, but it no longer seemed unimportant.

"I guess a fellow ain't a slacker merely because he doesn't carry a gun," whispered Johnnie to Charley Russell. "I guess a fellow's a slacker only when he refuses to do the thing by which he can help best — as I tried to do."

A sudden command brought Johnnie's observations to an end. The boys arose, gave a cheer for President Sparks, and marched from the building. Swiftly they crossed the drill ground to their camp. Then a bugle blew taps, and a few minutes later every lad in the regiment was stretched on his cot under his canvas roof — now in very truth a soldier of the soil.

CHAPTER IV

BREAKING IN THE RECRUITS

CLEAR and sweet through the dewy morning freshness rang the strains of a bugle, flinging its message far and wide through the little city of tents.

“ Oh! I can’t get ’em up,
“ Oh! I can’t get ’em up,
“ Oh! I can’t get ’em up,
“ In the morning,”

sang the brazen trumpet. And indeed it appeared to tell the truth. To the tired lads asleep in the tents it seemed but a moment since taps had sounded the night before. Indeed, Charley Russell stirring sleepily on his cot, thought that the strains meant for his awakening were merely meant for the ending of the notes that had sent him to slumber; for he had gone to bed before taps sounded and had fallen asleep while that call was still ringing in the crisp night air. But the insistent blare of the trumpet soon bored its way into his consciousness, and he rolled sleepy-eyed and shivering from between his

warm blankets and began to dress. His tent mate, Alec Cunningham, was already afoot.

Like magic the entire camp suddenly hummed into activity. The sound of many voices rose like the buzzing of busy bees, — boys shouting and calling and laughing and joking as they dressed.

From somewhere down the company street a sleepy voice cried out, "Hey, Bill! What time you got? Honest, it ain't more than ten minutes since we turned in. Makes me think of that sign we saw at the railroad station yesterday: 'Twenty minutes for refreshments.'"

A laugh went up and the same voice continued, "Where do we go from here, Bill?"

"You wash, you big boob," came the answer.

"Where?" demanded the first speaker.

"Over there," came the shouted reply.

"Over there! say, I ain't going to France. I want to know where to wash here at State College."

"Why, over there at the hydrants. If you would just wake up and open your eyes, you'd see where I'm pointing."

From all parts of the camp boys were pouring forth, like ants from a disturbed ant-hill.

"Bet I beat you fellows to it!" shouted some one in another company street.

"You're on!" came the reply, and the sound of many feet racing over the turf came faintly to the ear. Then followed explosive, sputtering sounds

as though heads were being ducked under cold spigots, and yells followed for forgotten towels.

With only fifteen minutes between reveille and the salute to the colors, and more than three hundred boys to wash at a limited number of faucets, it took some lively hustling for the regiment to get through with its morning scrub. Water taps were kept running and head followed head in quick succession under the enlivening streams. Indeed, there was no temptation to dally. Early summer though it was, the temperature at the elevation of the camp, some twelve hundred feet above the level of the sea, was crisp and chilly at six-fifteen in the morning.

At six-thirty the bugle blew again. Raggedly but promptly the regiment assembled in the great street facing the flag, with one battalion to the right and one to the left of the flagpole. Then, as the band played "To the Colors," the regiment stood at salute, the stars and stripes rose slowly to the top of the pole, fluttered for a moment in the breeze, and unfurling, waved gently above the serried ranks.

Hundreds of times before had these lads of the Boys' Working Reserve seen Old Glory waving aloft; but never had the sight meant to one of them what it now meant. As never before they comprehended why men were willing to die for this bright-colored bit of bunting. They sensed the fact that where these colors floated, freedom, and justice, and peace, and order prevailed, that women were free from

wrong, children safe from harm, and men from oppression. They realized that it was to preserve and perpetuate such freedom, won by sacrifice and bloodshed, and developed by years of trial and effort, that our armies had gone to battle with the beast of Europe. In that great struggle they themselves were about to play a part — a noble part, as they now understood. Every heart in the regiment thrilled at the understanding. And the thrill was reflected on the long rows of shining faces that stretched up and down the company street — shining faces that looked aloft.

Of a sudden a sharp command rang out. In a few moments the regiment found itself in the wet grass of the parade-ground, ready for its first morning drill. With few exceptions the regiment was composed of boys who had no military training. Practically the entire regiment was one great awkward squad. Each captain took his company in hand, and with his lieutenant began to whip it into form. And now the captain of B Company found, as the Colonel had suggested, that he had indeed a talented company. The Camp Brady group numbered about one-fifth of the company. These boys, scattered through the ranks, very greatly helped their fellows to understand and carry out the various orders. With one of their own number as second in command, they were eager that Company B should excel. Lem, moreover, proved to be an excellent drill-master.

With his firm but quiet and patient manner, he speedily won the good-will of the company. From the very beginning, therefore, Company B forged to the front, and the truth of Jimmy Donnelly's observation was emphasized. It wasn't the shirts but the fellows inside the shirts that counted.

Drill was followed by setting-up exercises. Spread out over the sparkling parade-ground, the regiment presented an attractive picture in the early morning sunlight. At every sharp word of command three hundred boys swayed to right or left, or bent forward or back, and three hundred pairs of arms or hands or legs or feet waved in unison. And so brisk was the pace set by the leader, one of the majors in command, that every boy was kept on the alert.

After what seemed to the hungry lads an interminable length of time, the bugle sounded the mess call and the regiment marched to McAllister Hall for breakfast. Half an hour later the boys were back on the parade-ground for further drill. Each company had been formed into four squads, each squad being headed by a corporal chosen by the men in the squad. Again the Camp Brady boys came to the front. Their familiarity with military drill and the eagerness with which they were working to put B Company ahead, naturally led to the choice of three of them as corporals. Jimmy Donnelly, with his ready wit and good heart, Charley Russell, the lover of animals, and George Larkin, a big, serious, de-

pendable lad, were chosen by their comrades to lead three of the four squads.

In the fourth squad were Frank Anderson and his chums. The latter wanted Anderson to be the head of the squad.

"Me be a corporal?" responded Frank scornfully. "I guess not. What's a corporal for but to do the dirty work for somebody else? Nothing doing. Let Worthington be corporal."

So the post had fallen to George Worthington, a lad from another part of the state. In view of Anderson's contemptuous characterization of the position, Worthington's willing acceptance of it was highly significant. Had Anderson been looking for a subservient tool, for some one who would gladly do another's "dirty work," he could hardly have made a better choice. Well-built, good-looking, and able, young Worthington yet suffered from a fatal defect of character. Already his face showed not only weakness but craftiness as well, with perhaps even a streak of cruelty. In the short period of their acquaintanceship he had fallen completely under the influence of Frank Anderson. If that latter had it in mind to do anything unfair, he had a pliant tool in the boy who thus became his nominal superior.

Following the after-breakfast drill period, the regiment returned to camp for the daily housekeeping. Useless as the required orderliness seemed to some of the boys in the regiment, they were to learn, before

the training camp ended, that orderliness is merely an evidence of self-mastery, and that what seemed to them a foolish regulation was in reality training of the greatest value. For it was to teach them one of the fundamental lessons of success in life. But boys who had never been compelled at home to observe the rule, "A place for everything and everything in its place," now found it hard to comply with the rigid rules of the camp life. Particularly was this true of such self-willed boys as Frank Anderson. The difficulties of the corporals, who must enforce orderliness, were still in the future, for on this first day the higher officers went from tent to tent giving suggestions and assistance where needed.

The tents in order, the boys of the regiment had a bit of leisure. They took advantage of it to get acquainted. All along the company street boys swarmed out of the tents and collected in little groups or visited friends in other tents or scraped the acquaintance of their neighbors.

At the expiration of the rest period, the bugle blew again and the regiment assembled in companies, for the first lesson in farm work. Each company was at once divided into two equal parts, the one led by the captain, the other by the lieutenant. Each half went to a distinct task. As second in command, Lem had to take charge of half the company. The squads headed by Jimmy Donnelly and George Worthington fell to his lot. The captain took charge of the

squads led by George Larkin and Charley Russell. With a short word of direction to his lieutenant, the company commander barked a brief command. His two squads formed into a little column, and he led them across the parade-ground toward the grove. Lem took his little group in a different direction. Squad after squad followed, marching toward all points of the campus, where instructors were waiting in different buildings to give the lads their initial lessons.

For three hours and a quarter the little white camp basked in the summer sun, as silent as a deserted city. The flag fluttering idly aloft. Canvas walls waved in the breeze. The airing blankets hung flapping beside the tents. Into these opened canvas houses stole the wind and the life-giving sun to cleanse and purify and make wholesome. With the cots neatly made, clothes and shoes placed in exact and orderly positions, and floors clean and dustless, the little tents were the very acme of neatness and comfort; and the scene was made the more peaceful by contrast with the stirring activity that had so lately characterized it, and that was so soon to mark it again.

For at eleven-thirty Johnnie came marching home again — Johnnie, and all the rest of the embryo farmers — for an hour's leisure. By this time the ice was broken, not to say completely melted. The contact at meals, on the drill ground, and in the classes, had

banished whatever feeling of formality and diffidence had existed when the regiment first assembled. Everybody was on good terms with everybody else. Wherever boys met, informal introductions and bright bits of talk followed.

"I'm Jones, of C Company," said a lad to little Johnnie Lee, when the two ran into each other at the end of the company street.

"I'm Lee, of B Company," was the reply. "Glad to know you."

"Glad to know you," was the response. "My company's right back of yours at drill, you know, and I noticed you this morning," said Jones.

"Because I'm so small, I suppose," said little Johnnie, with a good-natured laugh at himself. "But they tell me I ought to be the champion weed puller of the regiment — I'm so near to the ground."

The two boys laughed.

"I don't know anything about your ability at weed pulling," said Jones, "but I noticed you know how to drill. You fellows in Company B have got us all skinned."

"Thanks," smiled Johnnie. "See you later."

And the two parted with a friendly smile, Jones continuing on his way across the camp ground while little Johnnie went on down his company street, more pleased than he would have admitted. Already he had done well enough at something to attract attention. He resolved henceforth to try harder than

ever. It might even be possible that he, little Johnnie Lee —

Crash! In his day-dream, Johnnie had collided with Corporal Donnelly, who was running to catch a ball.

“If we only cooked our own grub, I’d put you on kitchen police,” grunted Jimmy, as soon as he had recovered his breath. “What do you mean by interfering with your superior officer?”

He made an attempt to glare at Johnnie savagely, but the attempt ended in a grin, and each went on his way laughing.

Corporal Donnelly, who could never be separated long from a baseball, had produced two or three old balls and some lively games of catch were going on. Any one passing down B Company street had to look sharper than Johnnie had looked, to guard against being hit by a ball. Many boys ran the gauntlet, with yells of pretended derision for the ball tossers who failed to hit them. Other lads visited back and forth in the different company streets, examining one another’s tents and equipments, and making fun over misfit uniforms. Still others strolled over to the big Y. M. C. A. tent and were welcomed by the Secretary.

He was a genial young man, with a winning smile and a deep voice, who looked as though he could bat out a home run or smash through centre at will. With his cordial manner he instantly put his youthful visitors at their ease.

"Glad to see you, boys," he said. "I thought some of you would be over this morning. This tent is for your accommodation, you know. I'm always glad to do anything I can for the boys who are going to help feed the army. In a war like this, we've all got to pull together; so if there is anything I can do for any of you, come right to me and tell me about it.

"You'll have more spare time after a while, and when you want to read, you'll find books in that case over there. You are welcome to play the Victrola at any time. The records are in that case. You will find games of various sorts at that little table. All I ask is that when you are done with things you will put them back in their places. If everybody does his share, you know, it's much easier to keep things in order."

"I wonder if everybody is going to tell us that," sighed Alec Cunningham; and those who knew how hard it was for him to be orderly laughed with him.

"That big table in the corner," added the Secretary, "is the writing-table. You will find pens, ink, and stationery there and you are welcome to use them at any time you want to drop a line to your folks or write to your friends."

Several boys at once made their way to the table. Others followed. So it happened, as the Secretary intended it should happen, that many of these young soldiers of the soil spent their first leisure moments in writing home.

Dinner followed the hour of leisure, and the afternoon was a repetition of the morning, with drill for three-quarters of an hour, followed by another period of instruction in farm work. Then came a half hour of rest before supper, the march to and from McAllister Hall, and the lowering of the flag at sunset, with the regiment in line and the band playing "The Star Spangled Banner."

Then the regiment fell out. Some of the boys went to their tents. Some spent the long twilight playing ball on the parade-ground. Some wrote letters in the Y. M. C. A. tent, whence came the almost continuous sound of the Victrola, as boy after boy played favorite airs. But all the laughter and shouting and sound of music died away as the bugle blew the call to vespers. From all quarters the boys came flocking to the great company street. And there the regiment sat in a great group on the turf, while the Y. M. C. A. Secretary gave a brief talk. Songs were sung, a prayer said, and the first day at camp was history. It had been a day well spent as tired muscles and heavy eyelids testified. Then came taps, the extinguishment of every light, and a deep silence broken only by an occasional laugh or a low call from tent to tent that brought instant reproof from some watchful corporal. Soon the last sound was hushed. The regiment was wrapped in slumber. The end of a perfect day had come.

CHAPTER V

INSUBORDINATION

FOR Lem it had been more than a perfect day. His brief stay at the training camp had been one of unbelievable happiness. The distinction that had come to him had warmed his very soul. From earliest boyhood Lem had known the pinch of poverty. Almost from babyhood he had suffered because his widowed mother had less money than her more fortunate neighbors. It was no fault of Lem's that his clothes had always been poor and patched, that he had had none of the costly playthings other children possessed. Yet thoughtless boys had derided him because of his clothes or teased him about his poverty until he had become shy and sullen, fearful of his fellows, and surly and revengeful in disposition.

Then had come his first summer at Camp Brady, with its new vision of life and its new lessons of conduct, with his bitter struggle with himself and the final complete triumph of his better self over the meanness that had grown up within him. Later the formation of the Wireless Patrol, and his elevation

to office in consequence of his faithfulness and trustworthiness, had wrought still further changes in the lad's heart, his very gratitude increasing his dependability.

Now had come this unlooked for honor, this appointment to a position of authority, not merely among his few associates, but authority over boys who were strangers to him. It was almost beyond belief. It was too good to be true. Lem hoped he deserved his appointment, or at least was worthy of it. In any case, he meant to become worthy. So he set his whole soul to the task of making good. But little did he dream of the bitter road he was to travel, of the hard experiences that lay ahead of him, before he could hear that official commendation for which he yearned, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

His difficulties began without delay. During the setting-up exercises next day, and all unrealized by himself, Lem split his shirt down the back. Old and feeble as it was, the threadbare garment would not stand the strain Lem put on it in bending over. The result was a long rent that ran nearly the length of his back. There was nothing essentially ludicrous about a split shirt; but Frank Anderson, with clever cunning, dropped a witty and mean little remark about Lem's misfortune, that set his hearers to laughing and fastened an unpleasant nickname on Lem.

Then came a drill period. Every time Lem's back

was toward the squads he was drilling, a titter broke out. Again and again Lem turned sharply to discover the reason for the sounds his quick ear detected. But always the faces were ironed out before he could turn completely. Yet he saw a gleam of mirth in more than one eye and knew that something was afoot behind his back. Intently he listened, to locate the sounds. When he found that they came from Worthington's squad alone, he realized that he himself must be the cause of the merriment. Had some one said to him that his shirt was split, Lem would have understood. Doubtless he would not have enjoyed the laughter behind his back, but he would at least not have had the tormenting feeling that now took shape in his heart that the tittering boys were making fun of him.

With this belief there rushed into his mind the old feeling of desperation, of anger, almost of hatred, that he used to feel as a little boy when he was tormented. For a single instant he lost control of himself and saw red. He was instructing Worthington's men in squad formations, and was marching ahead of them. Like a flash he whirled and said savagely, "Order in the ranks! Stop your giggling and attend to business."

It was a fatal mistake. The Anderson crowd, seeing that they were annoying Lem, now tittered the louder every time Lem's back was turned toward them. Again and again he turned sharp about but

never could he catch them. Every face was smoothed out instantly. The moment Lem turned away from them, the titter broke out anew.

Then B Company drilled as a unit. Again there was a tittering in the ranks. By nudges and covert glances and even by direct gesture, the boys in Worthington's squad made known to the rest of the company the cause of their merriment. Presently the entire line was agrin from end to end. Even Lem's own friends joined in the laugh. Of course there was nothing malicious in their merriment. No more was there in the good-natured smiles that came from the remainder of the company.

But Lem knew nothing of this; and when he saw the line agrin, he was mortified beyond belief. He flushed and became confused. He misunderstood his captain's commands and issued orders contrary to his superior's mandates. Speedily the company was thrown into confusion.

The captain indignantly turned upon Lem. "Is your hearing defective?" he demanded sarcastically.

"No, sir," said Lem meekly, not knowing how to defend himself.

"It ain't his ears, Captain; it's his shirt," called out Little Johnnie Lee, forgetful of discipline at the sight of his big friend's mortification.

The commander came close to Lem, and, laying a hand on his shoulder, slowly spun him around. Then he, too, joined in the laugh. But he laughed openly and with a hearty good-will.

"It's all right, Lem," he said. "You've split your shirt and these young savages are laughing at you. Don't pay any attention to them. They don't mean anything."

But the harm was already done. Lem knew that some of his subordinates did mean something. He knew that they were even now rejoicing at his discomfiture. He guessed why and how the inattention in the ranks had been caused. Instinctively he knew that Frank Anderson had seized the opportunity to belittle him. A feeling of great indignation, almost of anger, filled his heart. He had done nothing to hurt Anderson. In urging his fellows to become soldiers of the soil, he had merely done what he considered his duty. And with his own appointment as lieutenant in place of Anderson he had had nothing whatever to do. There was no reason whatever for Frank Anderson's ill will toward him. Yet Lem realized that circumstances had made this rich and powerful lad his bitter enemy. He would rather not have had his lieutenancy than stir up such hatred. Now that he had the position he meant to hold it and to make good despite anything that Anderson and his clique could do. But Lem little realized to what extent Anderson would carry his campaign against him. Strong of character though he was, if he could have foreseen some of the situations that awaited him, he would not have faced the future so cheerfully.

For when he found that his shirt was torn, he put the best face on the matter possible and laughed with the company. Thereafter there was no further disorder in the ranks, and the drill proceeded without interruption.

From the parade-ground the regiment marched to camp again to put the tents in order before work began. On the previous day the flag awarded daily to the company whose tents were in the best order had flown above the tent of Company E's commander. To-day Lem was determined that the flag should fly at the end of B Company street. After changing his shirt and setting his tent in order, Lem strolled down the company street. He called together the four corporals.

"We want to win that flag to-day, fellows," he said, "and I know you will help do it. Let's have every tent perfect."

The corporals scattered, to look after the tents of their respective squads. Lieutenant Haskins continued on down the company street. He glanced sharply into every tent he passed, and saw that each was in perfect order.

Then the bugle blew the summons to work. Quickly the various working groups assembled and marched off to their respective duties. The other half of B Company went for a lesson in gardening, while Lem led his half to the dairy barns. Here the boys were to learn how to feed and care for the cattle.

The first thing to be done was to clean the stables and bed them with fresh straw. It was not altogether a pleasant task. Lem was the only boy in the group who had ever cleaned stables. During the preceding summer, when the Wireless Patrol was at Camp Brady, the boys had assisted farmer Robinson, who was short-handed. There Lem had sometimes helped Teddy Robinson with his stable work. So now he picked up a dung-fork and assisted the instructor in showing the boys how to handle the manure.

Frank Anderson looked on the entire proceeding with unconcealed disgust. "Look at that ragamuffin lieutenant," he sneered in an undertone. "Takes to handling manure like a duck to water. It's easy to see where he belongs."

At every possible opportunity he dropped a mean and insinuating remark behind Lem's back; and his followers, who at first had regarded Lem merely with indifference, soon began to share Anderson's feeling of dislike, not to say hatred, for their superior. Thus Anderson slyly sowed the seeds of discontent in B Company.

Meantime Lem, trying with all his heart to do his duty and to hold his discipline up to the mark, found it increasingly difficult to enforce discipline. Naturally enough his first clash was with Anderson. It came before the present lesson was finished. One after another, the boys did their turn with the ma-

nure forks. But Anderson cleverly evaded the duty. Corporal Worthington winked at the evasion. The instructor did not notice it. But Lem's watchful eye detected the fact that Frank was dodging his duty.

"Here's a fork," he said, handing that implement to Anderson. "Just clean up that corner of the stable."

Anderson looked at him scornfully and said with a sneer, "Don't let me deprive you of the pleasure. You do it so naturally."

A flush mounted to Lem's face, but he kept his temper. "I don't blame you for not liking the job," he said, "but we all have to do it. That's what we're here for, you know."

"You'll have to excuse me," said Anderson insolently. "I didn't come for that purpose." And he turned his back on his lieutenant.

It had come to a show down. Instantly Lem saw that. He realized that if he let Anderson "get away with it," his own authority was gone forever. Furthermore he was thoroughly aroused, though controlling his temper well.

"Just a minute," he said sharply. "Will you take this fork and do your trick, or shall I report you?"

By this time the entire squad had been attracted by the altercation. They gathered in a ring around the principals. Both Frank and Lem were determined not to yield.

"Of course I won't," snarled Anderson. "You can report and be darned."

It was a flat challenge. Lem did not hesitate a moment. The instructor was then in a distant part of the building. "Mr. Smith," he called. "Will you please step here? We need you."

The instructor came promptly.

"Mr. Smith," continued Lem briskly, "here is a fellow who will not do his turn with the fork. He says he did not come here to learn to handle dung. I have given the order and he flatly refuses to obey. Will you sustain my order?"

"He will have to obey the rules if he is to remain a member of the Working Reserve," said the instructor firmly. "If he will not obey, he will have to leave the training camp." Then turning directly to Anderson, he said diplomatically, "We all have to do disagreeable things in war time. You are too good a patriot to refuse to do your share."

Just as the Y. M. C. A. Secretary at Central City had put Anderson in a position where he had not the courage to remain, so now the college instructor had put him in a light that Frank could not stand. To be discharged from the camp for an ordinary disobedience of regulations would have worried Frank not the least; but to be thrown out as a slacker was another thing entirely. And Frank instantly saw that this was what would happen if he now refused to obey Lem's order. He judged others by himself; and knowing what use he would make of the situation if conditions were reversed and Lem instead of

himself the recalcitrant one, Frank was afraid not to comply. He believed that Lem would spread nasty stories about him and he feared the result. With the nation white hot with war spirit, he could not afford, even though he was only a boy, to be branded as a slacker. All this Frank saw in a flash. Reluctantly, therefore, and with poor grace, he took the manure-fork that Lem again proffered, and began to fork the manure from the corner indicated into the waiting wheelbarrow, which, in turn, he emptied on the compost heap.

There were no further difficulties in the course of the lesson. The stables cleaned and freshly bedded with new straw, the young recruits were taught how to feed the animals. Silage had to be taken from the silos and measured, each animal receiving just so much. Hay had to be thrown down from the mows and each cow's portion weighed. The grain ration had to be compounded and served in definite proportions. As the work was done, Mr. Smith, the instructor, explained why the animals were fed as they were. The various food ingredients made up a balanced ration, with so much protein, so much carbohydrate, and so much fat and mineral matter. And he explained that the protein foods furnished the elements for repairing worn-out tissues, while the carbohydrates supplied energy, and the fats and minerals gave the animals the fat and mineral substances needed for growth or the production of milk.

Frank Anderson's remarks concerning the care of cattle had made dairying seem anything but agreeable. But now, as Mr. Smith set forth the principles involved in feeding and made plain the particular purpose of each element in the food, the class became absorbed in what they were doing. Practically all the boys in the group had studied chemistry at high school. When they realized that the farmer who feeds his cows scientifically is really a chemist, dairying at once took on a new aspect, and farming assumed a new dignity in their eyes. And this was but the first of many lessons that were to completely alter the ideas of most of the lads at the training camp as to up-to-date farming. Long before they left Penn State, these lads of the Boys' Working Reserve saw that the scientific farmer requires quite as wide a training and fully as much ability as the engineer, the chemist, or the physician. They saw that if they ridiculed a farmer of this type, they merely exhibited their own ignorance.

More than three hours were consumed by the lesson in dairying; and excepting for Frank Anderson, every boy in the group came away from the dairy buildings feeling that the time had been spent to good advantage. Every boy had learned something. And every boy had done more. He had had his eyes opened to a new and broader view of life.

Smartly the little company swung along in line, keeping perfect step, as they marched from the dairy

buildings back to camp for their hour of leisure. Lem marched beside the little group, busy with his own thoughts. He was wondering whether or not he had done the right thing in forcing the issue with Anderson. If he had not had Anderson's whole-hearted hatred before, he knew that he would have it henceforth. He knew that Anderson and his satellites would lose no opportunity to ridicule and annoy him. But that did not worry Lem so much on his own account as it did on account of the company. Would Company B become less efficient because of this opposition to himself? Would some of the boys in it learn less because of the resulting dissension than would be the case if he were not in authority? Had he done his best for the regiment, and so for his country, by bringing Anderson to terms? Would it not have been better to overlook Anderson's disobedience?

These and a hundred other questions Lem asked himself. He was trying to look at the matter from an impersonal point of view, trying to see what was his duty in the situation, irrespective of his personal feelings. For a lad of his years he was considering the matter in an unusually broad and judicial manner. He was honestly trying to guide himself by those principles of action that had been inculcated in the Wireless Patrol by its leader.

But no matter from what angle Lem viewed the situation, he could not see that he had done wrong in

compelling the obedience of Anderson. His experiences at Camp Brady had shown him the necessity of absolute discipline, and he knew that unless he compelled obedience to his orders, he would be useless as an officer. The realization made him sigh, for he foresaw that there would be other occasions when he might have to exert his authority and when he might not come off so well. On the whole, he was pleased with the outcome of his encounter with Anderson. He believed that he had handled the matter fairly and properly. And altogether, aside from his official opinion of the matter, Lem could not help but exult in the fact that he had gotten the better of the boy who was trying so hard to down him.

When the company drew near camp and Lem raised his eyes and saw the little flag waving at the end of B Company's street, the feeling of exultation increased. His company had won the palm for orderliness for one day at least. Lem resolved to omit no effort that would bring the flag to the same place often enough for Company B to win the blue ribbon at the end of the training camp.

Lem went for a moment to his tent. Then when the little column fell out he headed for the Y. M. C. A. As he passed Anderson's tent, he noticed Frank sitting inside on his cot. His face was buried in his hands. Evidently he was in deep thought. Also he seemed chagrined. Instantly a feeling of sympathy sprang up in Lem's heart.

He halted abruptly. "Anderson," he said, "I am sorry we had that disagreement this morning. I am sorry I had to call you down before the whole squad. But there was nothing else I could do. You made it necessary. I don't want you to think there was anything personal about the matter. No matter how an officer feels personally, he has to maintain discipline. I hope we shall have no difficulties in the future."

Anderson eyed Lem coldly, a savage gleam in his eye. "You needn't stop here to crow over me just because you had the better of one little tilt. It takes more than one swallow to make a summer. And anyway, he laughs best who laughs last."

It was no use. Lem saw that Anderson meant war to the finish. Lem had done all he could do to try to smooth things over. And he had failed. "Well," he thought, "it is no fault of mine. I've done the best I know how to be square. Let him do his worst. He can't do much more than he did to-day and I got through that all right. We'll see who laughs last."

And right there Lem made a great mistake. Could he have foreseen some of the difficulties that lay in his path, he would not now have gone so cheerily on his way.

CHAPTER VI

A FRIEND IN NEED

WHEN ignorance is bliss, it may, under some circumstances, be folly to be wise; but that was not true in Lem's case. He needed the traditional wisdom of a serpent if he was to come triumphantly through some of the difficulties that lay ahead of him. But of this Lem could, of course, know nothing. So he went on his way blissfully ignorant, or at least cheerily ignorant, happy that he had surmounted so successfully the first obstacles that had arisen in his path. Straight to the Y. M. C. A. tent he strode, after leaving Anderson, and there he spent his period of leisure writing his daily letter to his mother and the following communication to his friend, Captain Hardy, in answer to the letter from the Captain that had suggested the formation of the Central City unit of the Boys' Working Reserve.

"I got your letter and read it to the boys one day when we were at the Y. M. C. A. All of our boys were glad to volunteer, of course, but some of the other boys made fun of the suggestion. Mr. Haskins

helped us out by telling us what a chance it was to serve our country. He put it up to us in such a way that all the fellows felt the truth of what he said except Frank Anderson, and he — I don't like to say it because it looks as though I wanted to say something mean — after what Mr. Haskins said, he just had to join or look yellow.

“He got sore at me because the plan went through, but all I did was to read your letter to the fellows. Then when we got to State College there was a lieutenantancy vacant in our company and Frank tried to be made lieutenant. For some reason the Colonel picked me for the place. That made Frank awful mad. It was no fault of mine. I didn't try to get the place. But when I was appointed, I took it because the Colonel said they needed a fellow who had had military drill and nobody in the company except our fellows had ever drilled. I just kept thinking all the time about what you used to tell us, that we must be willing to do anything, big or little, that will help to win the war. So I took the place and am trying to do everything I can to help the work along.

“But it is pretty hard to know just what to do. Anderson is trying to be mean. We had one little run in because he didn't want to do his share in cleaning out the cow stables and I had to call him down. There wasn't anything personal about it. I simply did my duty as an officer. I tried to forget that I

was Lem Haskins and that Frank Anderson had been mean to me. I tried to forget that and just remember that I was an officer and had to do an officer's duty. But Frank took it awful hard because I had called him down. He as much as threatened me just now. I don't know what he will do, but I guess he can't do anything more than act mean.

"And I am trying hard to remember all that you told us about controlling our tempers. But it is awful hard because Anderson says — well, you know I haven't any good clothes and I wasn't able to buy new shirts like his crowd, to go with the uniform, and he makes fun of me. It isn't my fault that my shirts are patched and I know it isn't any disgrace to wear a patched shirt if I do what is right. But it is hard to do what is right and not act the way I want to toward him. But I am trying to remember all you have done for me and how you would be disappointed if I did what I shouldn't do.

"Now I guess that is all I have to write. We are working hard to learn all we can so as to help the farmers as much as possible. My, how I wish I could have gone to New York with you. But I will do the best I can right at home here. Tell the fellows with you that we are working for Uncle Sam, too; but we all wish we were with you in New York. Have you caught any German spies yet?

"Your friend,

"Lem Haskins."

When he had finished his letter Lem felt better. He had shared his troubles with a friend and they no longer seemed so weighty. In fact, when, in passing through the camp after leaving the Y. M. C. A. he met Mr. Smith, the dairy instructor, and the latter thanked Lem for his help during the morning session, Lem felt jubilant. His troubles seemed to have vanished into thin air.

The afternoon's duties served only to heighten Lem's feeling of satisfaction. His half of Company B went for a garden lesson, just as the other half had gone in the forenoon. The gardening instructor kept the group busy and happily interested from the start. Spades were given to the boys and they were set to work making a seed-bed.

"Remember now," said the instructor, "that though you boys can't go to France and dig trenches, you can get quite as much exercise and be quite as useful here in America in the furrows of freedom. When you go out on the farms and are put to work digging gardens, try to remember that you are digging for the world's safety just as much as you would be if you were excavating a trench in Flanders. When your back aches and your hands are full of blisters, as will certainly be the case sooner or later, if you do your duty, think of the fellows whose backs have been broken and whose hands have been shot away. Grit your teeth and dig all the harder. You've got to carry on because you are in the second line of de-

fense. If you fail, the fellows in the first line trenches will also fail. You've got to go over the top with a great big production of food. And to do that, you've got to use your heads as well as your backs and arms. Now go to it."

After that speech there wasn't any chance for Anderson or any other boy to loaf on the job. This instructor had put them just where the dairy instructor and Mr. Haskins had placed them. They couldn't shirk without looking yellow. Indeed, not a boy in the group wanted to shirk, for the instructor soon showed them that gardening was more than digging in the soil, just as they had already learned that dairying was more than cleaning stables. He showed them how to get manure compactly under ground so that there would be no interruption to the upward flow of moisture from the soil reservoir. He showed them how to pulverize and fine the soil so that the rainfall would be caught and plant roots could penetrate easily. He told them of the capillary action in the soil exactly like the capillary action they had studied in physics that brought the soil water to the surface, and pointed out how to prevent evaporation by breaking up this capillary action at the surface of the ground through systematic shallow cultivation. Finally he showed them that plants use thirteen elements in their growth, in proportions as definite and varying as chemical mixtures, or rather chemical mixtures in the laboratory; for scientific

gardening and farming is really nothing less than chemistry on a huge scale—the balancing of the needed elements in the soil by supplying those that are lacking, and the preparation of the soil so that chemical action can take place.

For three hours the squad toiled with spades and rakes and hoes, not only preparing seed-beds, but also planting various seeds. So interesting did the instructor make the work that every lad in the group was absorbed in what he was doing. The period passed quickly and with no unpleasantness of any sort. And Lem continued to feel happy and even elated.

If sunshine follows rain, the reverse is also true, and black clouds succeed fair skies. Lem had had his period of sunshine, but soon the sky began to cloud over for him. Anderson and his fellows lost no opportunity to make mean and insulting remarks to or about Lem. During the evening rest period that followed the gardening lesson, many of the young farmers went to the Y. M. C. A. tent. Lem spent a few minutes in his own tent, then decided to write a letter to Henry Harper, who was in New York with Captain Hardy. So he also made his way to the Y. M. C. A.

There he found that the writing-table was lined almost solidly with boys. There was one vacancy in the line. Absorbed in the thought of what he was going to write, Lem paid no heed to the identity of the lads who sat on either side of the vacant space,

but slipped into the place and sat down. Instantly the boy on his right rose noisily to his feet, sniffing disdainfully. He gave voice to a sound that was really little more than a grunt, and that was meant to express disgust. If he intended to attract attention, he succeeded well. Every boy at the table looked up. The lad who had drawn their attention was, of course, Frank Anderson. With caution as excessive as though he were trying to avoid a muck heap, Anderson drew back from Lem and withdrew from the table. He said never a word. But the sneer on his face and the expressiveness of his action spoke plainer than words could have done. Poor Lem flushed like a beet. He grew red from the roots of his hair to the top of his collar. There was nothing that he could do to remedy the situation, except to try to appear unconcerned. He tried, but was obviously embarrassed.

His confusion increased when Anderson slowly stalked to the end of the bench and tried to sit down. To make room for him the boys on the bench pushed toward Lem. Frank's withdrawal from the table had left Clarence Westervelt nearest to Lem. As the others now crowded him toward Lem, he imitated his leader and rose to his feet, disdainfully drawing away from Lem. Poor Lem's confusion became pitiful. His face expressed both anger and mortification. He shut his teeth tight and bent his eyes on the table, while his face burned and his heart

beat fast. He was trying hard to keep a grip on himself.

Meantime the attention of every lad in the tent had become focused on the silent little tragedy that was being enacted at the writing-table. Few of them knew the reason for it. But none of them misunderstood. The drama was too plain to permit a misunderstanding. A boy of patrician features, haughty carriage, and costly uniform was trying to humiliate a lad in a ragged shirt. That was plain to everybody. And it was equally evident that he was succeeding. More than one lad looked at Lem with deep sympathy. No matter what the occasion of the trouble might have been, everybody in the room instinctively felt that this was carrying a private grudge too far.

They did not know, any more than Lem knew, to what extent Anderson was capable of carrying a grudge. But it soon became evident that more torture was in store for Lem. For Clarence Westervelt, following exactly Frank Anderson's plan of action, walked proudly to the end of the bench and began to crowd the others up toward Lem again. And the boy now nearest to Lem was Roger Branscome. The cruel, sneering smile on his thin, hard lips foretold all too plainly what he would do when he had moved near enough to Lem.

He never got near enough to Lem, however, to follow the example of his fellows. For suddenly

Tom Sheppard, a rugged country lad with red hair, a square chin, and a face full of freckles, jumped from a chair in which he was sitting at one side of the tent, and almost leaped to the writing-table. His face just now was black as a thundercloud. Without a word he stepped over the bench and plumped himself down in the vacant spot beside Lem. But he did not sit close to Lem. Instead he crowded hard against Roger Branscome. Then, spreading out his great arms and shoulders, he leaned over the table like a very rock of Gibraltar, unconcernedly picking up a pen and starting to write.

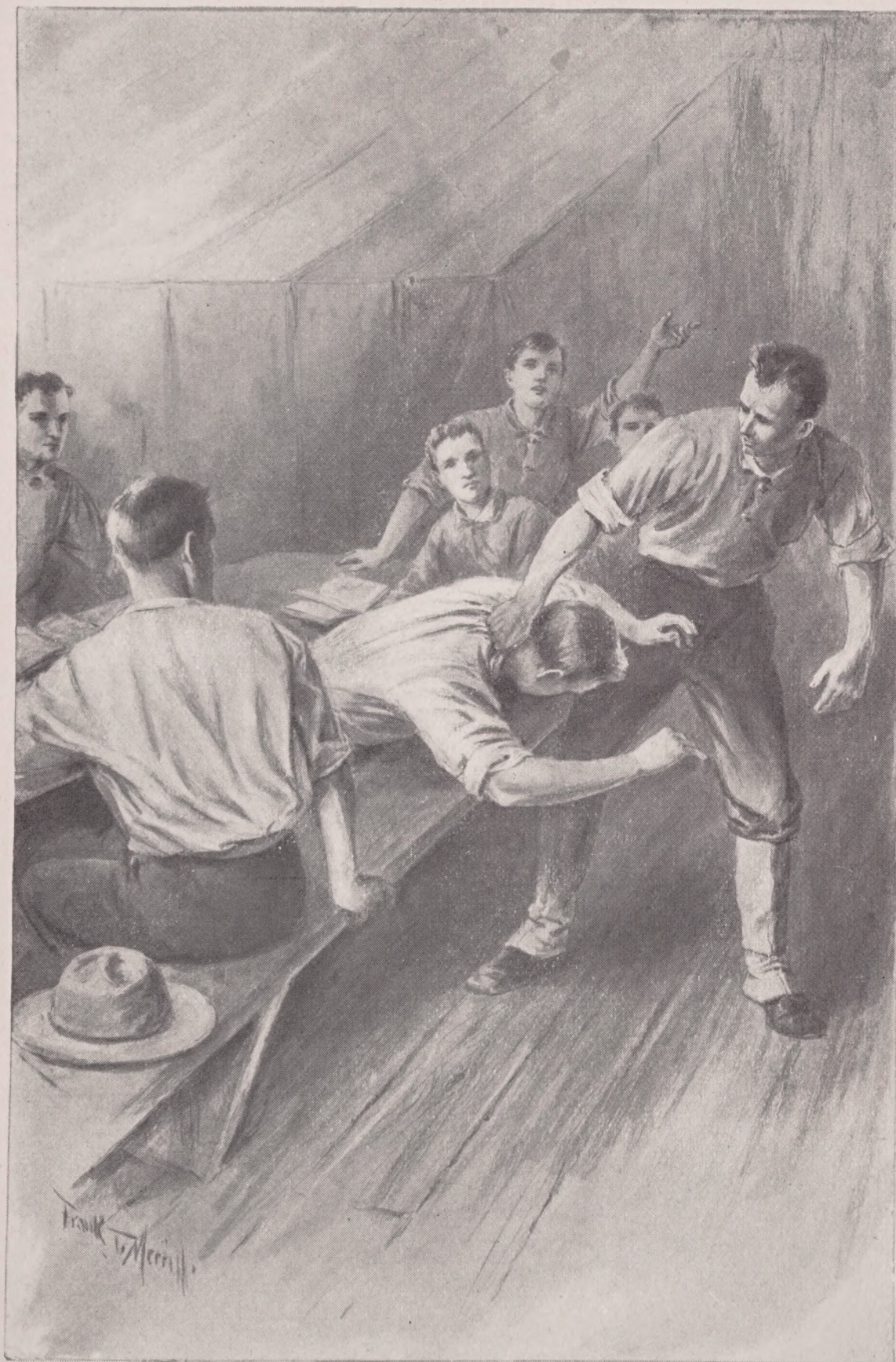
Roger Branscome had risen to his feet before Tom sat down. The latter had crowded up so close that Roger could not regain his seat, for Clarence Westervelt was still shoving the line forward from the other end. Roger, standing in a cramped position and crowded on either side, presented a ludicrous appearance. A titter went round the room.

Roger blushed and looked angry. "Move up," he said sharply to Tom Sheppard.

Tom was apparently as deaf as the traditional adder. He did not budge, but continued unconcernedly writing. Roger stood still an instant, his position constantly becoming more uncomfortable.

"Move up," he fairly shouted at Tom. "Move up, I say."

Tom did not seem to hear him, for he went right on with his letter. The titter in the room became a laugh. Roger flushed a deeper red than Lem had.



He yanked him over the bench as he would have handled a sack of meal.

"Let me out," he shouted, struggling to step over the bench.

Tom did not move and the boy on Roger's other side could not move. The laughter became uproarious. Roger suddenly lost all control of himself.

"Let me out," he fairly screamed. "Let me out." At the same time he struck blindly at the big farm lad who had turned the tables on him.

Then something happened that Roger will never forget. Like a flash of lightning Tom Sheppard was on the other side of the bench, dragging Roger after him by the scruff of the neck. He yanked him over the bench as he would have handled a sack of meal, and set him down on his feet with a jar that fairly made Roger's teeth rattle.

"I'll let you out, you darned little polecat," he said. "You bet I'll let you out. You don't think I'd want to sit beside you, do you? Now you get out of here and —"

He was interrupted by Frank Anderson, who had sprung from his place at the table and now stood before him with flashing eyes. "You let him alone," said Anderson.

"If you say any more," remarked Sheppard calmly, "you'll go out of the door with him. I've seen and heard enough of your crowd. You're a disgrace to our company. I don't know what you've got against the Lieutenant, but nobody except a pack of cowards would annoy him the way you fellows try

to. He can't fight you because he's an officer. And I don't believe you'd fight anyway. But I'm not an officer and I can fight whenever I like. And if I see you fellows worrying the Lieutenant again, I'll break every one of you in halves. Get out of here or I'll do it now."

Anderson took a good look at the lad's great shoulders and brawny arms and hands, glanced at the square jaw and the firm mouth, now set like a steel trap, and putting his pride in his pocket, walked silently from the tent, with Roger Branscome trailing behind him.

All this had happened so suddenly and so swiftly that the Y. M. C. A. secretary, who was engrossed in some work at his desk in a corner of the tent, had not heard the quarrel in time to interfere. Now he stepped swiftly forward, just as Anderson and his satellite disappeared through the tent door.

"What's this disturbance about?" he demanded severely.

Sheppard was already turning to the table to renew his letter writing. "There wasn't any disturbance," he said quietly. "It was just a couple of polecats getting thrown out." And he sat down, while the tent rang with laughter and a great buzz of voices broke out as everybody began to discuss the occurrence.

When Tom Sheppard was seated again, Lem turned to him. His eyes were full of gratitude. "I

ought to be able to fight my own battles," he said, "but they've got me in a hole. It's just as you said: As an officer I can't fight, though it was all I could do to keep my temper. Besides, I am beginning to believe that they are trying to get me into a fight so I'll be reduced to a private."

"Right you are," assented Tom. "It's as plain as anything. But don't you let them get your goat. Everybody in the tent saw what was going on. I just couldn't stand it any longer, so I butted in. If they do any more dirty tricks like that, you let me tend to them."

A few minutes later Lem went to his tent. He shook hands heartily with Tom as he left the table. When he looked into the lad's clear, honest eyes, and felt the firm grip of his strong fingers, he was almost glad that the incident had occurred, for it had brought him a new friend, and one that Lem instinctively knew was worth having. So he went to his tent happy in spite of what had occurred. Sunshine had come again after clouds.

CHAPTER VII

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS

SOON after Lem had reached his tent Corporal Donnelly came in. He was followed shortly by his fellow-corporals, Charley Russell and George Martin. Apparently the three had merely drifted in as they often did, for a few minutes' chat. But Lem knew in his heart that there was nothing accidental about their visit. He understod perfectly well that loyal friendship had made them come to him in this trying hour. They were there purposely, Lem realized, and their purpose was to cheer him up.

But Lem had reacted so rapidly after his little talk with Tom Sheppard that he was no longer in need of being cheered up. There was nothing disconsolate about his appearance now, and his fellows were glad to find that Lem was no longer downcast.

For a little while no mention was made of the incident at the Y. M. C. A. tent. Instead the talk was about the lesson in gardening.

"My," said Charley Russell, "I'm glad we did that little bit of farming last summer at Camp Brady.

I can see already that it is going to help us a lot now. And what the instructor said about soil preparation explains a lot of things we did last summer that I didn't understand then. I wish we'd have another lesson about animals soon. You don't suppose they teach us anything about farm dogs, do you?"

"Probably nothing except to beware of the cross ones," said Corporal Donnelly with a smile, "but we didn't need to come here to learn that."

"They've got some dandy horses here," continued Charley. "I was over at the horse barn to-day, while you fellows were playing ball during the rest hour. They're going to teach us how to harness and drive, pretty soon."

"I wish somebody would show us how to harness that Frank Anderson," said Corporal Donnelly. "He's got a tough mouth and won't take the bridle worth a cent."

"I guess Tom Sheppard can harness him," said Corporal Martin.

"Tom certainly was bully to-night," said Corporal Donnelly, "but we don't need his help though we're glad he's with us. If the Wireless Patrol can't handle that gang of Anderson's, we're a bunch of dough-heads." Then turning directly to Lieutenant Haskins, he continued, "Lem, you know we're all with you, every one of us. We'll give that Anderson gang the worst licking they ever had if you just say the word."

"Thank you, fellows," said Lem. "But we've

got to remember that we're officers and we can't do anything that would disgrace us. You know what Captain Hardy would tell us — that we are here to work for Uncle Sam and not to waste our time in personal quarrels. Besides, I think that Anderson wants to get me into a fight so I'll be reduced."

"I think he does, too," agreed Corporal Martin. "I think he has been trying to right along. But we are on to his game, all right. Everybody in the Y. M. C. A. tent saw what he was up to, and I don't believe he will try it again because everybody would know who was to blame."

"If he stops trying to pick a quarrel," said Charley Russell, "I don't see that there is much else he can do. I don't believe we'll have much more trouble with him."

"You've got another guess, Charley," said Jimmy Donnelly. "That kind of a reptile never quits trying to bite. You fellows just keep your eyes open. He'll be up to something and it will be pretty sly. We've got to get wise and tip Lem off about it."

Sooner than anybody had expected, the truth of Jimmy's words became evident. Lem had set his heart on having Company B win the blue ribbon for orderliness. During the brief existence of the training camp, Company B had so far led the regiment only one day. But as no other company had won that distinction more than once, this did not seem strange. At least it did not seem so to any one

but Lem. He had made an unusual effort to have his company perfect. Each day he called upon his corporals to see that everything was in proper order, and had even made a hurried daily inspection himself. On each occasion he had found things in what he considered perfect condition. That was why it puzzled him a little when the flag fluttered at the head of some company street other than his own.

Lem brought the matter up now. "We can't do anything to Anderson in which we can even up with them. Anderson cares for nothing but himself. He has no sense of loyalty to the company or to the regiment. He's mad at me and I believe he thinks more about downing me than about anything else. If we can block him, if we can put B Company at the head of the regiment in spite of all he can do, that will hit Anderson hard. It is a much better way to get even with him than to go out and fight him. One way we can win some distinction is to get that blue ribbon for orderliness. Can we do it?"

"Surest thing you know, Lem," said Corporal Jimmy. "We'll take extra care from now on to have everything in apple-pie order; won't we, fellows?"

"You bet," cried the other two corporals.

And certainly they did their best to make their words good. The next day at the period for putting the tents in order, the three corporals hustled from tent to tent in B Company Street, scrutinizing

everything carefully. They spoke to Corporal Worthington, too, and asked him to be sure that his squad had their tents in perfect shape. Just before the bugle called them away from camp, Lem strolled through B Company street himself, glancing sharply into every tent. Then he made a rapid tour of the camp, glancing into the tents in the various company streets through which he passed. To Lem it seemed as though no other company could quite compare with B Company in orderly appearance. So he marched off to work with his half of B Company, a few moments later, well satisfied.

But when he came marching back, at the end of forenoon work period, and saw the flag fluttering at the head of D Company street, Lem was deeply disappointed. But his disappointment was as nothing compared to his amazement when his captain called him into his tent and diplomatically suggested that Lem try a little harder to make B Company more orderly. The Colonel, the Captain said, had reported B Company as not up to the standard of the rest of the camp. His captain, who fully understood how hard Lem was working for the success of the company, was as tactful as possible in what he said. He did not want Lem to feel that he was being reprimanded. But Lem was not deceived by the way the thing was put. He knew that he was being called to account by his superior officer.

At the same time he knew he was not only blameless, but that he had been more than particular in his efforts to enforce orderliness. In view of what the captain had just said, it was idle for Lem to try to convince him that things had been in order when the company marched away. That would look as though he were trying to excuse himself or lie about the situation. So he replied merely that he would try harder in the future.

Lem was sadly perplexed. He could not doubt the Colonel's word, yet he had seen with his own eyes that the tents of B Company were in perfect order. Leaving the Captain's tent, he started on an inspection, but found it useless, for, after their return from work, the boys had more or less disarranged things. So Lem went to his own tent, sadly puzzled.

He got his first insight into the matter, when he called in his three corporal friends and told them about the situation.

"That's plain enough," said Jimmy Donnelly, when Lem finished his story. "It's just another effort to get you into trouble, Lem. I don't know how Anderson did it, but I'll bet a dollar we'll find he's at the bottom of it."

Lem was amazed. Not given to treachery himself, he was slow to suspect it in others. But the longer he pondered over the matter, the more he became convinced that Jimmy was right. However Anderson had done it, Lem now believed his enemy had

secretly and treacherously disarranged things in an effort to bring a reprimand down upon him, and had succeeded all too well. If Anderson could and would do this, how far would he go and what might he not do? A very black look came into Lem's face as he considered the matter and a feeling of deep anger rose slowly but irresistibly in his heart. Instinctively he foresaw, that if this sort of thing continued, he was going to have difficulty in controlling his temper.

But the problem now was to discover just when and how the treachery to Company B had been accomplished. For, if Anderson had done the thing he was suspected of doing, his act became more than something done to an individual. It was really and truly treachery to his company. The longer Lem thought the situation over, the more this aspect of the situation stood out. Had the matter affected only himself, he would have preferred to pass it over. But it affected the entire company, and Lem owed a duty to his company, just as he owed a duty to his regiment. That duty made it necessary that he should discover the culprit, if possible, and see that he was brought to justice. Thus Lem could not honestly overlook this blow aimed at himself, however much he might wish to do so. Yet if he did his duty, if he hunted down the perpetrator and exposed him and the perpetrator proved to be Anderson, it would appear as though Lem was

persecuting Frank because of the personal feeling between them. And above all things, Lem did not want to appear mean minded. No matter from what point of view Lem looked at the situation, it appeared very ugly.

All this flashed through Lem's mind in the few minutes that he remained silent, while he turned over in his mind Corporal Jimmy's words. When finally he spoke, he said slowly, "I'm afraid you are right, Jimmy. I'm afraid you're right."

"Of course I'm right," said Jimmy. "Didn't I tell you he'd be trying something sneaky next? There's only one way to fix a fellow like that — get him with the goods and show him up."

"I'm afraid so," sighed Lem, "but I don't like to do it."

"Well, you don't have to," said Charley Russell. "Leave it to us. We'll get him."

CHAPTER VIII

A REPRIMAND

RAPIDLY the days flew by. One by one the boys were introduced to the multitudinous tasks that make up the round of existence in the country. Each day they learned more concerning the intricacies of farm life. If any open-minded boy in the regiment had come to the training camp thinking that farm life was a matter that called for little besides muscle, he was speedily undeceived. As, day by day, the complexity of life and labor on a modern farm became evident, the boys lost entirely whatever feeling of contempt they might once have had for farmers and farm life, and first wondered at and then came to admire the man who could run a farm successfully. No matter what they studied, whether it was hay-making or the repairing of machinery or the feeding of calves or the care of poultry or the preparation and planting of a good seed-bed, they found that muscle alone would not answer. They realized that the successful farmer must have brains as well as brawn and that unlike the town

man, who is an expert in one thing only, the farmer must be master of twenty sciences.

As they passed from lesson to lesson, each lad in the regiment found some particular task that especially appealed to him. Thus little Johnnie Lee, who had come thinking that growing food was a wearisome and joyless task, speedily found that gardening, far from being unattractive and tiresome, was fascinating. The quick-growing seeds planted in the first garden lesson came up speedily, while the plants started by the earlier classes grew large and sturdy; and little Johnnie realized for the first time what exquisite pleasure there is in tending growing things. To hoe and rake and feed and water these little creatures, and to see them grow day by day, brought to Johnnie a joy that he would never have believed possible. The reason was that now Johnnie was working for an end and working intelligently. He had come to understand exactly what he was trying to do and how to do it. Pulling weeds and wielding a hoe no longer seemed to him to be merely pulling weeds and wielding a hoe. They were conserving water and breaking up capillary action by means of a hoe — a far different matter from the unintelligent toil he had formerly ignorantly known only as “weeding the garden.” In short, Johnnie was experiencing the joyful satisfaction that comes to every intelligent soul who finds his job in the world. He was realizing for the first time the satisfaction of creating.

Probably no one found a keener delight in his work than Charley Russell. From infancy he had been unusually fond of animals. Dogs and horses were his especial favorites. Ever since the day he had begun to train Judge Gordon's hunting dogs, in order to earn his share of the money required for the camp outfit of the Wireless Patrol, he had looked forward to the day when he could work with animals. And now that day had come.

Finding no dogs to handle, Charley had early turned his attention to the college horses. Early and late he was at the horse barns, whenever he could snatch a few moments from the required duties. Because of his evident love for the animals and his fondness for handling them, the stable hands gave Charley unusual privileges. He was allowed to do things about the barns that none of the other young farmers had ever been permitted to do. When other lads of the training corps were down in the village after supper, Charley was in the barns helping the men with their chores. His pocket-money, that another boy would have spent at the movies, Charley invested in apples for his four-footed friends. In no time at all they came to know the lad and responded to his feeling of affection. Before many days had passed more than one farm horse would whinny at Charley when he entered the barns. In an amazingly short time he acquired an astonishing amount of knowledge concerning the care and

feeding of horses and the treatment of sick ones. And he soon knew almost more about the habits and dispositions of the various work horses than the regular stable hands did.

Naturally enough, interest in the different lessons varied according to the tastes of the boys in the squads at work. Some disliked work with machinery; some found the care of animals irksome. But one lesson seemed to be popular with everybody. That was the session for chopping wood. At first glimpse, it seemed foolish to many of the boys to spend time learning to chop wood. There was not a boy in the regiment, with the possible exception of one or two rather effeminate lads, who did not believe he knew very well how to split wood. But a session in the wood-yard behind one of the barns soon dispelled this idea. The fact soon became evident that with the possible exception of Tom Sheppard, there was hardly a boy in the regiment who really understood how to handle an axe to advantage. Not a boy in the troop would have believed that a lesson in wood chopping could be as interesting as the instructor made it. He showed them how to split logs with wedges. He taught his pupils how to cut diagonally across the grain of the wood instead of straight across, and showed them when it was best to split a chunk of wood endwise and when best to strike it on the side. He showed how to cut lengths from a log or a cord-wood

stick both with the cross-cut saw and the axe, and explained when to do each. Doubtless all American boys like to chop wood. Perhaps this is because they are descended from a race of pioneers who subdued a continent with their axes. Whatever the reason, the boys at Penn State found wood chopping one of the most pleasant tasks set them.

Yet not all of them did their stints without some unpleasantness. It was Lem's fate that he should come away from the wood-yard with another ache in his heart. If only the group he headed had not included Corporal Worthington's squad, Lem would have had no trouble. With all the other members of B Company he had become very popular because of his unselfish efforts to keep the company in the lead. Anderson's treatment of Lem at the Y. M. C. A. had reacted against himself, and excepting for his immediate followers, he had few friends and well-wishers in the regiment. But Worthington's squad had been assigned to Lem, and he was too good a soldier to ask for a change on personal grounds. The result was that daily he had to endure whatever humiliating act Anderson or his crowd chose to perform. His position was rendered the more difficult by the fact that though he was an officer he was at the same time a fellow student of the lads he led.

On the occasion when Lem's half of the company had its lesson in wood cutting, Lem, as usual,

buckled down to the work at once. For years he had split wood for his mother's fires; he had handled an axe when in the forest with the Wireless Patrol; and altogether he was pretty proficient with that instrument. At once, therefore, he began to instruct some of the greener lads while the teacher was busy with others. He was making the chips fly smartly when Roger Branscome stopped for a second in passing and looked at him.

"Don't work too hard, Lieutenant," he said, "or you'll split your shirt."

The remark was apparently innocent enough. But in view of what had happened it was as venomous as the blow of a copperhead. Furthermore, it was a remark to which Lem could not take exception. So he paid no attention to it and went on with his work. But the barb from Roger's tongue stuck in Lem's heart, as Roger meant it should.

Presently Clarence Westervelt and Frank Harkins, another of Anderson's chums, moved over to the place where Lem was chopping and stopped to look at him. In pretended admiration Clarence remarked quietly to his companion, "He's some wood-chopper, isn't he? Why, he can chop wood almost as well as he can clean cow stables. He knows how to do *all* the hired man's jobs."

Like Roger's remark, this bit of conversation was poisoned with venom. It was said in a low tone

that was intended to reach Lem without being overheard by any others. The experience at the Y. M. C. A. had at least taught the Anderson crowd caution. But Corporal Jimmy had come within ear-shot while Clarence was speaking. Quick as a shot he answered.

"Yes," he said. "Lem's pretty handy with an axe. If he keeps on, he'll be able to split wood almost as well as Abraham Lincoln could."

But Jimmy's well-meant reply brought no balm to Lem. The poison had reached his heart. No matter how hard he tried to forget, he could not help remembering the unkind words with their implied slur and their reminder of his poverty. For an instant he even saw red and was tempted to give his tormentors a beating. But the thought that this was what his tormentors were trying to drive him to do steadied Lem like a dash of cold water. He took a grip on himself and went on with his chopping.

But now a new fear entered his soul. He began to be afraid that some time he *would* lose control of his temper and so play into his tormentors' hands. This thought really bothered him more than the insults his enemies had heaped upon him.

So Lem marched back to camp with a heavy heart. When he came in sight of the little village of tents and saw that the flag flew at the head of E Company street instead of B Company, his heart sank still

lower. But the climax came when his captain called him into his tent and this time told him bluntly that B Company would have to make a better record for orderliness. Again the Colonel had complained of the condition of B Company street and of some of the tents in the street. Yet Lem knew that when the company marched away to the wood-yard, the company street had been spotless and the tents without fault.

"I have spoken to the corporals each day, sir," he said. "Have you any idea whose tents were untidy?"

His superior looked at him keenly. "The worst offender in the company seems to be your friend, Corporal Donnelly," he said. "You musn't let your friendship stand in the way of your duty, sir."

And with that curt reprimand Lem was ushered out of his captain's tent.

CHAPTER IX

UNDER SUSPICION

WHEN Lem related to Corporal Jimmy what the Captain had said to him, Jimmy at once exploded. With his outspoken way and his fiery Irish nature, he was for going to the commanding officer and explaining that his tent had been in perfect order when he marched away to work. And perhaps that might have been the best course. But Lem advised against it.

“It will look too much as though you were lying, Jimmy,” said Lem. “If you say your tent was in order, the Captain will want to know how it got into disorder. You can’t tell him, for you don’t know. All you could do would be to say that somebody with a grudge against you must have done it. He will want to know who bears such a grudge and why. Then you will have to tell him, Jimmy, and, and — well, I’d rather he didn’t know the rest. He might think a fellow that had as many enemies as I seem to have is not fit to be a lieutenant.”

“But if he knew why those fellows don’t like you,

he'd think all the better of you, Lem. It's an honor to make enemies that way."

"Well, Jimmy, I'd rather you wouldn't tell him anyway. If you say anything, you'll have to tell him everything. I know in my heart it is no disgrace to be poor — only to remain poor. And I'm not going to remain poor. But I am poor now, and though it may be no disgrace it is not pleasant to have it held up before me all the time. All he knows about me now is that I am one of some three hundred boys who came here to help their country. That's enough."

"For your sake, Lem," Jimmy agreed reluctantly, "I won't say a word about it this time. But if those muckers stack our tents again, I won't stop with the Captain. I'll go straight to the Colonel. I won't stand for being put in a false light that way."

"Perhaps you are right, Jimmy. But I'd rather catch those fellows before I squeal. If we get the goods on them, I'll tell the Captain soon enough — though for personal reasons I'd rather not do it even then. But I owe that duty to the company, and I'd do it."

"All right, Lem. We'll catch them, then. You leave it to us. We'll get them."

"How are you going to do it?"

"Never mind about that. We'll get them all right."

But it was one thing to say it, and quite another

to make good what had been said. Jimmy went nosing about through the company, for he was a general favorite, making guarded and cautious inquiries; but nowhere could he find a ray of light. When the company marched off to work next day, the Captain led his charges away first, which was exactly what Corporal Jimmy had been wishing for. He brushed past Lem as the latter was assembling his squads.

"Send me back for something," he whispered.

"All right," said Lem in a low tone. Aloud he called, "Attention! Forward, march!" And the little group started for the horse barn.

Half-way to the barn, the Lieutenant suddenly cried, "Halt!"

As the troop stopped in surprise, Lem said, "Corporal Donnelly, I forgot a roll of papers that is on my cot. Will you please go back and get them?"

Corporal Donnelly saluted his superior and was off like a shot. Soon after they reached the horse barn he rejoined his comrades.

"Did you find what you were after?" asked Frank Anderson, with a sneering laugh.

"Sure," said Corporal Jimmy, and he handed a small roll of papers to Lem.

The papers were only a blind. He had made up the roll himself. The real thing he had gone for he had not discovered, for the company street was in perfect order. But if Jimmy had previously had

any doubts as to Frank Anderson's culpability, he had them no longer. Suspicion became certainty the minute Anderson opened his mouth. For the question, Jimmy well knew, was meant as a taunt. And Anderson would have no reason to taunt him unless he was guilty or had guilty knowledge, concerning the disordered tents. Even as Jimmy smiled in making answer, he vowed that he would never quit his search until he had exposed Anderson and brought upon him the punishment he so richly deserved. For with Jimmy, too, the matter had now become a personal one.

As Charley Russell had foretold, they were to learn to harness a horse. For the purpose of their lesson, the instructor — a stable hand temporarily employed to teach stable work — selected a large, powerful work horse. The animal had been in the stable for several days and was too full of spirit to stand very patiently. The instructor took a heavy work harness down from the pegs on the wall, and shouldering the harness, led the horse into the stable yard.

"Now watch closely," he said as he threw the harness on the horse's back. "We'll put the bridle on first," he continued, "so that we can control the horse better if he should become restive."

He slipped off the halter and tried to put the bit in the horse's mouth. The animal did not take it readily, but the instructor finally succeeded in getting

the bit in the horse's mouth, tucked the animal's ears under the crown of the bridle, and buckled the throat-latch. Then he fastened the collar, adjusted and buckled the hames, fastened the crupper under the tail, and tightened the belly-band. The horse was ready for work.

"Now take the harness off," he said, and one of the boys began to remove it. To do that was no trick at all, and in a jiffy the animal was stripped.

"Now put the harness back on," said the instructor.

By chance his glance fell on Frank Anderson. Frank took the bridle and had little difficulty in getting it adjusted. Having owned and ridden a saddle-horse for years, Frank was quite familiar with that part of a harness. He had never put on a work harness before, but it gave him no trouble. He handled it almost like an old-timer.

"Very well done," commented the instructor, and Frank walked away from the horse with a well-satisfied air.

Boy after boy followed, and except for increasing difficulty in getting the horse to take the bit, none of them experienced any real trouble until it came Johnnie Lee's turn. Little Johnnie was very short. The horse was very tall. Johnnie could by no means reach to the top of the horse's head. He tried various ways of getting the animal to lower his head, but the only result was to make the horse increasingly

restless. The animal would no longer stand quietly. Little Johnnie had to look sharp to avoid being trodden upon. Finally the inspector led the horse over to a fence. The animal stood at right angles to the fence, and Johnnie stood astride the top rail while he tried to adjust the bridle. His comrades, who had been standing in a single group, now naturally split into two smaller groups. And just as naturally Frank Anderson and his crowd collected on one side of the animal, while Lem's friends stood on the other side. But no one gave the matter any thought. It was merely a natural and accidental grouping.

Finally Johnnie got the bridle fastened, and, red and somewhat flustered, hopped to the ground to finish the job. The harness was too heavy for him to lift to the horse's back, so Lem stepped forward to help his little comrade. By this time the horse had become exceedingly impatient. Now he began to back away from the fence. The instructor caught the bridle and the horse ceased to back. Instead he began to prance sidewise. Before Lem saw what was happening, the animal had stepped on his foot. Fortunately only the edge of the hoof fell across his foot. No bones were broken and the foot was not injured. But it pained severely for a moment. Lem gave a sharp exclamation, partly of pain and partly of irritation, and threw the harness over the animal for Johnnie. While the latter was adjusting the straps and buckles, Lem nursed his aching foot.

As the officer in command, Lem had purposely left himself until last. By the time every other lad in the group had harnessed the horse, the animal was so restive that he could hardly be restrained. Lem started to put on the bridle.

"What did you step on me for?" he asked. The question was not put in anger, but to some of the on-lookers it seemed to be. The instructor was one of those who were deceived. He thought Lem intended to "get even" with the horse.

"Never mind," he said. "The horse was not to blame. Just hurry up and get that bridle on."

But it was one thing to order the bridle on and quite another to put it on. The impatient horse had now developed some stubbornness. Try as Lem might, he could not force the bit between the horse's teeth.

"Open your mouth," he said sharply. The horse refused to take the bit. "Open up!" said Lem.

The horse laid back his ears and began to prance. The instructor saw that Lem's effort was useless. He turned to get the halter, meaning to end the lesson. As he turned his back, Frank Anderson, on the opposite side of the animal, shot a little pebble with a stout rubber band. It struck the horse in the sensitive part of the flank. Standing between and slightly behind two companions, Frank was completely hidden from observation. No one but his immediate friends saw him shoot the pebble. The horse reared and began to plunge violently.

The instructor ran back and grabbed the horse by the nostrils. "Fool!" he said savagely at Lem. "Some of you might have been killed. A fellow that doesn't know any better than to strike an excited horse has no business being an officer. You ought to be demoted."

"I didn't strike the horse," said Lem, astonished at the reprimand.

"Then what made him jump so?" demanded the instructor. "I know that animal too well to believe he did that without cause. Something hit him and you were the only person near enough to do it."

"He didn't hit him," spoke up Corporal Jimmy. "I was standing near to help him if the horse got unruly. He never touched the animal."

The instructor eyed the two boys narrowly. "Then what did startle him?" he asked.

"I thought I saw a pebble drop on the ground when the horse jumped," said little Johnnie Lee. "Some one might have thrown it at the horse."

"Did any one hit this horse with a pebble?" asked the instructor sternly.

"No, sir," was the unanimous response, and nobody said it louder than the boys on Anderson's side of the horse.

The instructor led the animal away. "I advise you to keep your temper better," he said to Lem in parting. "It's a pretty small business, trying to get revenge on a dumb animal."

Very evidently the man believed that Lem had struck the horse and that both Lem and Jimmy had lied to him. It was useless to make any reply, and Lem turned away hurt and confused. The titter that broke out among the Anderson crowd did not help to soothe his spirit. Brusquely he ordered his companions to fall in. Then the group marched silently back to camp. But all the way there was a suspicious air of levity at the Anderson end of the line.

When the little group disbanded, Jimmy and Johnnie came at once to Lem's tent. They found him sitting glumly on his cot, his face downcast.

"It seems to make no difference how hard I try," he said to Jimmy, "somehow or other I always get in wrong."

"I'd like to know how they did that," said Jimmy wrathfully, paying no heed to Lem's lamentation.

"Did what?"

"Why, scared that horse."

"I don't see how anybody could have scared him. I had his head and nobody touched him. I'm sure of that. Yet I don't understand what made him jump."

"I don't either," said Jimmy. "But something did, and I'd bet a dollar to last year's almanac that that Anderson crowd did it."

"I'm certain I saw that pebble drop," piped up Johnnie Lee, "though, of course, the horse might have kicked it up when he jumped. I wish I could be certain."

"Well, if anything did hit that horse," said Jimmy, "it must have been a pebble, for nobody touched him with anything else. And if anybody did throw a pebble, I know where it came from."

There was a short silence, each boy being busy with his own thoughts. Suddenly Corporal Jimmy spoke up. "Johnnie," he said, "run out and get all the boys of the Wireless Patrol. It looks as though it would take the whole bunch of us to get those fellows. But we'll do it, even if we bust a trace doing it."

A few moments later Johnnie came rushing in. "Did you see the flag, Lem?" he asked.

"What flag?"

"Why, the one for orderliness."

"No."

"Well, it's flying right over our heads. We beat them out to-day."

It was the truth. The futility of Corporal Jimmy's return for the roll of papers was explained. He had found no disorder because Company B led the regiment for neatness. Poor Lem had been so down-cast upon his return from the horse barn that he had not even noticed the evidence of his success.

His comrades came trooping in. The situation was explained to them.

"Did you have old Dobbin?" inquired Charley Russell.

"That's what the instructor called him," said Lem.

"Why, that horse is as gentle as a kitten. He'd never act that way without cause. I believe Johnnie's right about the stone. Why, those scoundrels might have caused an accident. It's too bad you didn't see where the stone came from, Johnnie. Then we'd have had the goods on those fellows."

"We're going to get the goods on them," said Corporal Jimmy. "We're going to give them the biggest jolt they ever had. Frank Anderson needn't think that just because his father owns a big mill he can walk on us and get away with it. The whole Wireless Patrol is going after him and we'll get him as sure as we got those German dynamiters at Elk City. From now on, we've got to watch everything he does. We may even have to establish a twenty-four hour watch as we did at the Camp Brady wireless station. But no matter what it costs, we're going to get him. Aren't we, fellows?"

"Of course, we are."

"Mum's the word, but keep your eyes peeled."

"Right you are."

CHAPTER X

LITTLE PITCHERS HAVE BIG EARS

BUT keeping a watch on Frank Anderson did not seem to bring the desired results. For a time nothing serious occurred to increase Lem's unhappiness. Apparently Anderson realized that he was being watched, for he was now extremely careful to do nothing unfriendly toward Lem when he was under observation. He even ceased to make slurring remarks openly, for the story of what happened at the lesson on harnessing the horse got abroad, and more than one boy in the regiment who had heard Frank say mean and insinuating things about Lem expressed the opinion that if Johnnie Lee had seen a pebble fall, that pebble had to come from somewhere and Frank Anderson wasn't above sending it. For now it was realized that the matter was a serious one.

Unwittingly, Frank had hurt himself in making mean remarks about Lem much more than he had hurt Lem. The latter, on the other hand, by refraining from talking about Frank, and by refusing to

take advantage of his position as Frank's superior to attempt to even up his score with Frank, had won many admirers. For as soon as it was evident that antagonism existed between Lem and Frank, the boys in B Company who did not come from Central City began to ask questions. Naturally many asked Corporal Donnelly, who was perhaps the most popular boy in the company, and Jimmy frankly told the whole story. So it came about that except for his immediate chums, and one or two lads like Corporal Worthington who were impressed by Anderson's apparent wealth, Frank had few friends in B Company and the regiment. His action with regard to Lem had proved to be a boomerang.

By this time every boy in the regiment had come to realize that the work at the training camp was serious business. Before arriving at Penn State, many of the lads in the regiment had regarded the work before them as more or less of a lark. They could hardly associate life in a tent with hard work. But by this time the glamour had vanished. The bugle no longer meant romance. The playtime spirit had worn off. The sternness of military drill had impressed them with the necessity for obedience, for carrying out orders, no matter how unpleasant or difficult they might be. And the enthusiasm of the instructors had lifted the work to a level not dreamed of by these lads prior to their arrival at Penn State. The idea originally held by

many of them that in two weeks' time they could learn about all there was to farming, had entirely disappeared; and they saw that in so short a space as that they could hardly hope to get even the rudiments of general farm practice. Impressed with the seriousness of the work they were undertaking, and for the greater part honestly desirous of doing the very best they could to make themselves useful on the farms, they saw Frank's act during the lesson on harnessing in a light quite different from that in which they would have viewed it before coming to Penn State. And, justly or unjustly, the conviction gradually grew into belief that Frank Anderson *had* shot a pebble at the horse and that he had done so in the hope that the horse would injure Lem.

Necessarily some of the discussion and talk concerning the matter came to the ears of Frank's immediate friends and through them to Frank. He saw that he had been injudicious and he realized that he had hurt himself by his indiscretions. Not for one moment, however, did he give up the idea of "getting even" with Lem. More than ever he was resolved to make this lieutenant regret that he had ever dared to oppose Frank Anderson. But he realized that he must be more underhanded. He saw that whatever he did must be done in such a way that it could not be traced to him. For by this time Frank's desire to humiliate Lem had grown into a determination to get Lem into serious trouble.

So the watch set upon Frank proved futile. Inasmuch as there was no one of Lem's friends in Anderson's squad, it was not possible to keep him under observation every moment of the day; but by dividing the day into watches and giving each of his friends a watch, Corporal Jimmy kept such close observation on Frank that he knew practically every move he made. And he did it without letting Lem know what was afoot. Thus the situation got down to this: unknown to any but those engaged in it, a game of hide-and-seek was going on within the company. For Anderson and his crowd were keeping almost as close a watch on Lem as Lem's friends were on Anderson. Curiously enough, nothing came of either vigil. Lem did nothing which Anderson could use in discrediting him, and Anderson was discovered in nothing which Lem's friends could make use of in exposing him.

So for a time things went smoothly. There was no trouble of any kind in the company. The Anderson crowd drilled well, obeyed orders promptly, made no attempts to humiliate Lem, and appeared to enter into the work with real interest. Lem breathed freely again.

"For some reason they've quit," he said to Jimmy one day.

"Don't you believe it," said Jimmy. "I know that kind too well. They never quit. They're just biding their time."

When several days passed with no more trouble, Corporal Jimmy was almost tempted to share Lem's belief. Then something happened that confirmed all that he had ever thought or believed concerning the treachery of Lem's arch enemy. Oddly enough the discovery was due not at all to the watch that was still maintained but was made accidentally by little Johnnie Lee.

Johnnie was more than fond of the movies. He never lost a possible chance to attend them. For this trip to the training camp his parents had supplied him with more than his accustomed amount of pocket-money, and almost every night Johnnie went down to the town movie theatre. Because he was short in stature, Johnnie had formed the habit of going early and getting a seat in front, or rather, immediately behind the few rows of seats that were reserved for children. Every time he attended he saw the same group of small boys in these forward seats. Johnnie would not have paid any attention to them at all had it not been for the fact that they seemed so well supplied with money. Their clothes did not indicate that they came from homes of wealth, yet each boy seemed always to have a pocketful of pennies. Johnnie would not have known this, of course, had it not been that the lads were always counting over their coins. Yet he thought little or nothing of the matter until one night, while the orchestra was playing, he caught a

snatch of conversation from these boys, for this time they sat immediately in front of him.

"How much you got left?" said one youngster.

"Only ten cents," said another.

"Gee! You can't come to the movies much longer," said the first boy.

"Pooh!" said the other boy. "I'll get some more money to-morrow."

"Goin' to do it again?" asked the other.

"Yep."

"Goin' to let the rest of us help?"

"I don't know," said the other. "He said I musn't get caught. He said he'd lick me if I did. You kids ain't slick enough. I think I'll have to do it myself."

The music swelled so loud that Johnnie missed what followed immediately, but presently he caught this, "How much do we git out of it?"

"Nothin'. If I do the job alone, I get all the money."

"Nix," cried the other out loud. "Nothin' doin'."

"Shh!" called the manager, rapping for silence.

The boys quieted down again, but presently Johnnie caught this remark, made in an angry tone, "If you don't whack up, we'll tell on you."

That interested Johnnie. He bent forward and cocked his ear, forgetting for the moment the drama on the screen before him.

"You wouldn't dare," said the older of the two boys ahead of him.

"You try it and you'll find out quick."

"Then we'd both get into trouble. He said so."

"Don't care. You've got to give me part of the money."

"All right," said the other reluctantly. "Right after they go to work in the morning."

"Whose tent you going to fix this time?"

Now Johnnie was all attention. He leaned forward, scarcely breathing.

"We're going to fix that big stiff Donnelly again."

Like a flash of lightning revealing a darkened landscape this last remark illuminated all the conversation that had gone before. Johnnie saw the situation in an instant. His impulse was to grab the lads before him and drag them off to camp with him. Then he thought better of it.

"What Jimmy wants is to get the goods on 'em," he said to himself. "I'll find out who they are and where they live and then tell Jimmy."

He looked them over carefully when the lights were turned on during an intermission. Then he glanced around for the manager. He saw him standing at the rear of the main aisle. Johnnie slipped from his seat and quietly walked back to the manager. The latter recognized Johnnie as a Working Reserve boy he had seen at the theatre almost every night. He nodded pleasantly to him.

"You're leaving early to-night," he said. "Don't you like the pictures?"

"Sure," said Johnnie, "but I've got to get back to camp. By the way, who are those kids that sat in front of me — in the middle of the third row?"

"The bigger one is Bobbie Jones. The other is Sammy Spencer. They are a couple of little toughs from up the street here. Did they bother you? I've had to put them out once or twice. They got so noisy."

"No," said Johnnie, "they didn't bother me, but they're a lively pair. I thought they were going to have a fight a little while ago."

"It wouldn't be anything new," was the reply.

"Good night," said Johnnie.

"Good night. Come again."

So eager was Johnnie to impart the news of his discovery to his comrades, that he could hardly refrain from dashing wildly up the street. But he thought it wouldn't look well for a boy in uniform to be running along the highway like a school child, so he settled to a swift walk. As he hastened along, he turned the situation over and over in his mind. The farther he went the less rapidly he walked, for he was beginning to have doubts as to what he should do. He decided to tell his captain instead of Jimmy. Then it occurred to him that if either set a watch for the boys who had been hired to disarrange the tents, they might betray themselves and the boys

would then be afraid to disturb things. Then it would look as though he were telling an untruth. When he reached camp he was still undecided. As there was really no hurry about the matter, Johnnie decided to go to the Y. M. C. A. and think it over. He regretted now that he had not remained at the pictures and watched the boys a little longer. He might have heard something useful. But it was too late now. So he went to the big Y. M. C. A. tent and picked out an isolated seat in a corner. There he fell into a brown study.

He was aroused from his preoccupation by the genial voice of the Secretary, and looked up to find that individual smiling at him.

"You look sort of down in the mouth," said the Secretary sympathetically. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

Johnnie looked at him intently for a moment. Suddenly he said, "There's a whole lot you can do for me and I'll be thankful to you if you will help me. There are some things I want to tell you privately."

"Come to my desk," said the Secretary. "Nobody can overhear us there."

So little Johnnie and the husky secretary were soon seated face to face beside the big desk at the rear of the tent. Johnnie began at the beginning and told his big friend about the formation of the Central City unit of the Working Reserve. He told of Lem's poverty and Anderson's wealth, and of Frank's hatred of Lem and his attempts to humiliate Lem.

"I heard some boys talking about some trouble with a horse during a harnessing lesson," said the Secretary. "Has that got anything to do with this case?"

"Sure," said Johnnie. Then he related the incident and how he had seen a pebble fall at the same time the horse jumped. "The dickens of it is," explained Johnnie, "that it got Lem in bad with the instructor. The horse accidentally stepped on Lem when he was helping me with the harness, and the instructor thinks Lem hit the horse to get even. But he didn't. I was there and saw the whole thing. He never touched the horse."

Then Johnnie told about the tents having been disarranged and of the reprimand that had come to Lem and Jimmy.

"And they were both working their heads off," said Johnnie, "to win the blue ribbon. You just don't know how hard we've been trying. Now what I want you to do for me is to help us catch these kids."

Then Johnnie told the Secretary what he had overheard at the movies and described the small boys.

"Of course I haven't any proof yet," said Johnnie, "but it's perfectly plain that they must be the persons who mussed up our tents. And Anderson must have hired them. None of the tents in his squad have ever been touched."

"This is serious business," said the Secretary. "Have you told your captain?"

"No," replied Johnnie. "If I tell him, he might stay in camp and keep watch. Maybe he would scare the kids away. Then he'd think I had lied to him. You can keep watch from inside your tent here, and see what happens. Then you can tell the Captain what you saw."

"You've got quite a head on you, young man," smiled the Secretary, "and I'll do as you want me to. If all you say is true, your friend has had a pretty bad deal."

Little Johnnie flared up like a rocket. "Do you think I'm a liar, too, like Frank Anderson?" he demanded indignantly.

The Secretary laughed. "I didn't mean my remark in the way you took it," he replied. "Of course I don't think you are lying. I know you are a loyal friend to your corporal and your lieutenant. If injustice is being done, I'm glad to have a chance to help right it. You may depend upon me to be very watchful and very discreet. And I advise you not to say a word to another soul about what you overheard."

"I won't," assented Johnnie. "Good night and thank you. I am going to be ever so much obliged to you."

CHAPTER XI

A CATASTROPHE

HOW grateful he was going to be Johnnie had little idea. The end of the training period was drawing near. In a few days more the regiment would split up into little groups to be sent to as many different parts of the state where help was needed. As the training period grew toward a close, matters also moved toward a crisis for Lem. For Anderson had not been idle even though he had apparently ceased making hostile efforts. Well indeed was it that little Johnnie had overheard the talk in the movie theatre and acted as he had. But until matters came to a climax Johnnie could have no idea of just what a service he had performed for Lem or how very grateful he was to be to his big friend of the Y. M. C. A.

Meantime the boys were working with a will to accomplish the utmost possible before leaving Penn State. Forenoon and afternoon daily saw the little groups laboring at various tasks in as many different parts of the campus or farm. The orchards were pruned and sprayed. There were lessons in milking

cows and making butter. Hours were spent studying the mechanism of farm machinery, in taking apart and reassembling various implements, in learning how to make simple repairs. Cream-separators were studied, axle grease was applied to wagon wheels, stumps were dug, concrete was made. Indeed, no soldiers in the trenches of Europe worked harder than the boys of the Working Reserve did in excavating for the foundation of a silo and helping to erect that structure of cement. Great fields of corn were hoed under the blazing sun. The gardens were faithfully cultivated. Fields were plowed. Crops were harvested. In short, the boys had a taste of every kind of work they were likely to meet with on any farm in the state, and they had enough of a taste so that they understood the rudiments of practically any farm operation.

As the grass became long enough, hay was made. The boys cut the grass with regulation mowing-machines, turned it by hand, and with tedders, and raked and heaped and hauled it to the barn. They used implements both old and new in the work. Sometimes they raked the hay with old-fashioned one-horse rakes and stacked and loaded it by hand. Sometimes they gathered the cured grass with modern side-delivery rakes and got it on their wagons with self-loaders, the entire outfit being drawn by a modern tractor. Thus they were prepared to help either the old-style or the up-to-date haymaker.

It was clean, wholesome work. It called for energy and snap. It was fun to drive the horses. It was satisfying to see the loads grow. And when the self-loader was employed, the hay came up so fast that it kept three or four boys busy to build the load. Altogether hay-making was one of the most popular studies.

On the morning following Johnnie's talk with the Y. M. C. A. Secretary, Lem's half of Company B was to make hay. The farm where they were to work lay at some little distance from the college campus. It was probably the most hilly of all the college farms. Mostly the college acres stretched in vast level fields that sloped gently, with slight depressions and very tiny elevations here and there. But this particular farm, being near the mountain, contained many fields so rugged in contour that persons in one part of the field could not see persons in other parts of the same field. These little hills and valleys promised to make the task of loading the hay more than interesting, for on some of the slopes a poorly built load would almost certainly topple over. All this was set forth by the instructors when the lads reached the field after a smart march from camp.

The grass had been cut two days before by other boys. The day previous it had been turned by still another group. Now Lem and his two squads were to get the cured hay into the barn. The hay

still lay spread out on the ground. The first task, therefore, was to rake it into rows so that it could be piled into heaps, for in this lesson only the older kinds of implements were to be used. The horses were already harnessed to the rakes, and at once some of the instructors showed their charges how to operate the rakes, while others explained that each haycock should contain so many rakefuls of hay. This would make the cocks of uniform size, and space them at suitable distances for the wagons to be driven between the rows of cocks. A boy walking on either side of a wagon would lift the hay aboard, while one or more boys built the load. Load building was explained briefly.

When it was evident that all the boys in the two squads understood what was to be done, the different tasks were assigned. Several lads were ordered to begin raking. Among them was Corporal Worthington. Lem was among the number directed to follow and heap the hay in cocks. Frank Anderson and Roger Branscome were selected to load the hay. So there was little chance of any collisions between Lem and his enemies, and Lem was glad of it. He looked forward to a very pleasant morning, for he liked hay-making.

For a time everything went well. It was not a hot day and things went at a brisk clip. The boys on the rakes got the rows fairly straight, and the lads following with the forks piled the hay into

cocks at a lively pace. There were enough of them to heap the hay about as fast as the lads on the rake could collect it. Behind the boys piling the hay came the wagon, one lad driving, while the others built the load. An instructor rode a short distance with them to show just how to place the hay.

After one load had been hauled to the barn, the boys were ordered to change places. The boys from the wagons were now set down on the ground to fashion the haycocks. Some of the boys who had been making cocks were put on the rakes, while some of the rakers were transferred to the hay wagon. Lem was the last boy to be assigned to a rake. And the only rake that had not yet completed its final round with the first driver was Corporal Worthington's. He was driving a big horse that walked very slowly, and so had fallen behind the others.

"Lieutenant Haskins," said the instructor in charge, "you take that rake when it gets in." He pointed to Worthington's rake, coming slowly across the field.

"I'll just go to meet him," said Lem. "There's nothing to rake here."

"All right," was the reply, and Lem started toward Worthington. The latter was still at some distance. He drove up over the crest of a little swell, dipped down out of sight in a little hollow, and arrived at the top of the next crest just before Lem did. He saw Lem and understood his coming.

Quickly he turned the horse about, jumped from his seat and stepped briskly to the animal's head. As Lem came up, he was buckling the throat-latch.

"This strap came loose," said he, "and I thought I would fasten it for you. He's as slow as mud. But maybe if you use this switch you can make him move faster." He handed Lem a little gad.

"Thank you," said Lem, as he climbed to the seat. Then he touched the horse lightly with the stick and started down the slope. Worthington disappeared on the other side of it.

Now Lem noticed with surprise that the horse he was driving was the same one that had been used at the lesson on harnessing. Evidently the animal had done hard work in the meantime, for now the horse was, as Corporal Worthington had said, "as slow as mud." The rake, its teeth not yet lowered, rolled down-hill so fast the horse had to hold it back. The animal moved very deliberately.

At the foot of the slope Lem clucked to the horse, then touched him lightly with the switch. The animal pressed forward against his collar. Then he gave a leap that nearly tumbled Lem backward from the seat, and went tearing up the slope ahead.

"Whoa!" cried Lem, pulling hard on the lines. "Whoa, Dobbin!"

But Dobbin did not whoa. Instead, he flew up the slope in frantic leaps.

"Whoa!" shouted Lem, now thoroughly alarmed.

The horse rushed on, not running evenly, but bounding forward in great jumps. Very evidently he was frightened, and just as evidently something was goading him on. Lem was helpless to manage the animal. All he could do was to hold fast to the lines and try to keep from being pitched from his seat. The animal was entirely beyond control. Dobbin tore wildly, frantically on, over hilltops and through little valleys. On and on he went. Again and again Lem tried to stop him. The lad pulled until his arms ached, but the horse had the bit in his teeth and paid no heed. Dobbin rushed frantically on.

The field was very large. It was separated from the adjoining field by a stout wire fence. Lem could not see the wires, but he knew they were there, for the posts were plainly visible. The horse tore straight for this fence. Lem began to think about what he should do. If the horse ran into the wire fence, the animal would certainly be thrown and probably injured. On the other hand Lem did not think he could turn safely at such speed. For himself he gave hardly a thought. He was not afraid of harm. His whole mind was on the horse and how to save him, for Lem knew he could not stop him.

Meantime the runaway had been seen by his comrades, and pupils and instructors came running after Lem. Indistinctly he heard shouts, and he

supposed that some one was telling him what to do, but the hay-rake rattled so that Lem could not make out the words. He was practically without experience in the handling of horses. He could think of no way out of his trouble. If the wire fence had not been in the way, Lem would have let the horse run straight on until he was tired out. But the fence was there, and every second brought Lem nearer to it. Something had to be done and done quick. Lem decided to make a big circle if he could guide the horse. That would avoid the sharp turn he dreaded.

Lem pulled on his left line. In his excitement he probably drew the line harder than he meant to draw it. The horse responded with a quick turn to the left. The rake skidded badly, threw the horse off his balance, and horse, rake, and Lem came crashing to the ground together. For an instant Lem was stunned. When he got a grip on himself he found that the horse was struggling wildly to get up. Dobbin was all tangled up in the harness and the broken rake. Lem knew enough to sit on the horse's head, so as to check further struggles, and in this position his rescuers found him when they came panting up a few moments afterward.

Corporal Worthington was the first to arrive. He had been nearest to Lem when the horses started to run. Corporal Donnelly was there quickly. He had outrun all the others except Worthington.

Eventually the entire group came up, including all the instructors. Among them was the man in charge of the horse, the selfsame instructor that had given the lesson in harnessing. With experienced eye he glanced over the panting animal. Then he ran his hand down one leg.

"Broken," he said. "We'll have to shoot the horse." After he had despatched one of the boys for his pistol, he turned to Lem. Very sternly he said, "How did this happen?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Lem. "I hadn't gone more than two hundred feet before the horse suddenly began to run. I did my best to stop him but could not. I think something frightened him. Perhaps a bee stung him."

The instructor eyed Lem narrowly. "You are sure you had nothing to do with it?"

"Of course not," said Lem, astonished and indignant. "The horse went down the hill at a slow walk, then tore up the opposite slope like mad. I haven't an idea what made him do so."

"Who had this animal before Haskins here?"

"I did, sir," said Corporal Worthington.

"Was there anything wrong with him when you had him?"

"Absolutely nothing, sir."

"Was the horse excited about anything?"

"No, sir."

"And you turned him over to your successor quiet and in good condition?"

"Absolutely."

"Can you think of anything that might have made the animal run?"

"Not unless it was the whip, sir. The last time I looked at the animal, the Lieutenant was using a switch on him."

The instructor turned fiercely to Lem. "A whip, eh?" he snarled. "That explains everything. That horse never would stand a whip. Where did you get a whip? Why didn't you tell me you had one? But, of course, you wouldn't. I see it all as plain as day. This is the horse you struck at the harnessing lesson. You thought you had your chance to get even, out here in the hay-field, so you whipped Dobbin. I think this will just about finish you at State College."

In vain Lem tried to stop the instructor. The latter had his say, regardless of any interruptions. But when he had finished, Lem said, "It isn't true that I was whipping the horse in the way you think. Corporal Worthington said the horse was very slow and gave me a little switch. There it is now," and Lem picked up the fallen switch. "I hardly more than touched the animal with it. Of course, you will not believe me, but what I say is true. It wouldn't have hurt a baby to be hit that way."

"Don't tell any more lies," said the instructor curtly. "I've heard enough already. You whipped the horse. The horse never would take the whip."

He ran away and here he is. That's enough. When I've despatched the horse we'll finish getting in this hay. Then I'll see that you get what is coming to you. Meantime you are suspended from this class. Report to your captain at once and tell him so."

With a heavy heart Lem walked back across the fields to camp. He found his captain already returned with his squad. As he entered his superior's tent and saluted, his captain turned a black look on him. Before Lem could speak, his superior said, "Company B is again in disgrace for untidiness. The Colonel called me to account. He says our company street is the worst in the camp, and your friend Corporal Donnelly is once more the principal offender. Even your own tent, sir, would not pass inspection. What have you to say for yourself?"

"With regard to the disorder, only this: Things were in perfect order when we marched away. With regard to other matters, I am ordered to report that I am suspended from the haying class. A horse ran away with me and broke his leg, sir. The instructor will tell you about it when he comes."

"Go to your tent," said the Captain angrily, "and stay there until I send for you."

CHAPTER XII

A DARK OUTLOOK

WITH his face buried in his hands, Lem sat on his cot in his tent the picture of despair. He was terribly depressed. Had he been younger he would have wept. He wanted to do so now, but pride prevented him. Bitterly he thought over the experiences of the past two weeks. To do his duty for his country, as he saw it, he had given up the job that was to bring him the money he so much needed and wanted, and that his mother needed. He knew that not a boy in his company had made any sacrifice comparable with that in connection with the work now in hand. Further to do his duty as he saw it, he had urged the recruiting of the Central City unit. Thereby he had incurred the hostility of Frank Anderson. He could as logically have refused to attempt the work as some men with families could plead exemption from military duty. Nor had it been necessary for him to try to recruit a band of volunteers for the work. He could have come alone, without mentioning the matter to others. But Lem's

sense of duty had permitted him to follow neither course. It had seemed to him the food ought to be raised and that it would require as many hands to raise it as could possibly be gotten together. In doing what he had, he had merely done his duty. And this was the result.

He was disgraced. He was more than disgraced. He was hurt; he was injured. He would go back home under a cloud. People would no longer think well of him. No one would want to employ him. All that he had accomplished in three or four years of earnest effort seemed to be wiped out at one stroke. He had won the confidence and trust of the people of Central City. He was well thought of. Now he would drop back into that terrible state from which he had climbed with such difficulty. Indeed, to Lem it seemed as though his entire future were ruined, his chances of success destroyed — and all through no fault of his own. If ever misfortune singled out an individual for a victim, surely, Lem thought, it had selected him. So he sat on his cot, dejected, brooding over his trouble, too crushed in spirit to make any attempt even to appear cheerful.

But he was not allowed to remain in misery for a very long time. Ill news travels fast; and long before Lem's half of B Company got back, it was known throughout the camp that Lem had killed a horse and was in trouble. Corporal Russell, having returned with the Captain's half of the company, was

in the Y. M. C. A. tent writing a letter when he heard the news. Without a moment's hesitation he folded up his letter and started for Lem's tent. There he found Lem sitting, his face still buried in his hands, sunk in despair.

"Brace up, Lem," said Corporal Russell, entering the tent and slapping his comrade on the shoulder. "I just heard the news. Tell me how it happened. And for heaven's sake, don't look like that. It will come out all right in the end."

Lem straightened up and looked at his friend with dull eyes. "Charley," he said, "It was good of you to come to me. I seem to have the toughest luck in the world. This is the worst thing I've ever done. And it wasn't through any fault of mine, either."

"Tell me about it, Lem."

Lieutenant Haskins related the entire story.

"You say you didn't hit the horse hard?" asked Charley.

"Hardly more than laid the switch on him, merely tapped him with it."

"I know that horse well, Lem. He didn't like to be lashed with a whip, I know, but I don't believe he would have acted that way just on account of a little tap with a gad. Are you sure the horse leaped immediately after you touched him?"

"Now that you mention it, Charley, it does seem to me that the animal didn't begin to run until a moment or so after I touched him. But the interval

was very short. However, I feel sure that the horse did not leap forward immediately."

"Most likely the whip had absolutely nothing to do with the matter. Can you think of any reason why the horse would run so?"

"Do you think a bee could have stung him?"

"That's possible. Did you see any bees?"

"Not a single one."

"Then I don't believe it could have been bees. If a swarm had flown after the horse and kept stinging him, that would explain why you couldn't stop the animal. But if only one bee stung him, the horse certainly would have stopped in a few rods. It looks to me as though something must have hurt him and kept hurting him to make the horse continue to run so. Tell me the whole story again, Lem, and don't forget anything."

Lem did as requested, setting forth his story in minute detail.

"You say," said Charley, when Lem had finished, "that when Corporal Worthington saw you coming, he turned the rake around and drove back a little way into the hollow?"

"Exactly."

"Could you see him all the time?"

"Why, no," answered Lem. "He was out of sight for a minute or so."

"And he was buckling the throat-latch when you reached him?"

"Just so."

"Hmmm!" said Charley. "I'm going out to take a look at that harness right away. Now buck up, Lem, and don't give the Anderson crowd a chance to crow over you. Keep a stiff upper lip and put on a front. Good-by."

Charley struck out for the hay-field. He had hardly more than left the camp when he saw the little group of Reserve Boys marching back from the farm he was headed for.

"It will be just as well if they don't see me," thought Charley, and he turned aside and made a detour through the campus.

The instructor, who had shot the horse, was with the little troop. He went at once to the Captain of B Company and the two straightway stepped to the Colonel's tent. There the instructor told his story.

"This is a bad business," commented Colonel Dennis. "The horse is dead, you say, and there is no doubt that Lieutenant Haskins is to blame for it?"

"Absolutely none," replied the instructor. "He had a spite against the horse. The day his section had a lesson in harnessing, this horse accidentally stepped on the Lieutenant's foot. That made him mad. Later, when I wasn't looking, he struck the horse, and it's only a mercy of heaven that somebody wasn't killed. That horse never would stand for be-

ing hit. To-day he thought he would get even with the horse and whipped Dobbin as soon as he got on the rake."

"Does he admit all this?"

"No. He lies about it. He says he didn't strike the horse at the harnessing lesson and that he only touched it to-day with a little switch. But I know better."

Colonel Dennis looked keenly at the man, whose face was red with anger. "Can you prove that he struck the horse the day of the harnessing lesson? Did any one see him hit the animal? With nearly a score of boys looking on, somebody would have seen him if he struck the horse."

"Oh! We can find somebody who saw him all right enough," answered the man.

"You *can* find some one?" said the Colonel sharply. "Do you mean that you charge the boy with an act that as yet you have no witnesses to prove?"

"It wasn't necessary to have any witnesses. I know well enough that he did it. Something hit the horse and he was the only one near enough to do it. Besides he had it in for the animal."

"Be sure you get your proof, then," said the Colonel. "This is a serious matter. If the lad is guilty of the offenses you charge him with, he shall certainly receive punishment. At the same time we must be careful to see that justice is done. We cannot

punish anybody on supposition or hearsay. Get your evidence ready and we'll bring him to trial."

The instructor passed out, a gleam of satisfaction in his eye.

The Colonel turned to the Captain of Company B. "I'm free to confess," he said, "that I'm disappointed in this lad Haskins. I chose him for the lieutenancy because I was impressed with some things I saw as I watched him in the armory. But apparently I have been fooled. He seemed to do very well for a time, but of late I get none but unfavorable reports about him. And to-day his own tent would not pass inspection. In plain words, it looks as though I had picked a lemon for you."

"I don't know, Colonel," said the Captain. "The boy is a great puzzle to me. He works his head off at drill and is very faithful in his farm work. He seems to have good ideas, self-control, and real ability. Some of the men in the company seem to like him immensely. Others apparently dislike him just as heartily. But I have never seen him do anything to warrant their dislike. Frankly, he's a puzzle to me. But if he has been doing these things at his farm lessons, the sooner we get rid of him the better."

"Exactly. We'll put him on trial at once."

CHAPTER XIII

MURDER WILL OUT

THE next thing Lem knew he was facing a court-martial. The Y. M. C. A. tent had been chosen for the trial, and for the time being every one except those concerned in the trial was excluded from the tent. The matter created a great stir in camp. Everybody knew about the killing of the horse, and the entire regiment was discussing the situation. No one believed that Lem had intended to cause the death of the animal. If he had intended to do so, he would never have started a runaway in which he might have been injured himself. But many did think that he had whipped the horse out of spite, for the Anderson crowd had seen to it that this story went abroad with many unjust insinuations. The regiment was no different from the rest of humanity. It contained many individuals who were ready to believe the worst of any one. But Lem's own friends had been busy, too, and had won many supporters for Lem. Thus the entire camp was interested in the matter, some wishing Lem well and some hoping ill for him.

The commanding officers of the regiment, who formed the court, were fortunately not prejudiced either way. Excepting his own captain, few of the company commanders had seen much of Lem. What they had observed at drill was in his favor. But not one of them looked on him now, as he faced the tribunal, without being attracted to him. Entering the tent in absolute innocence, confident that no fair-minded judges could possibly pronounce him guilty of acts he had not committed, Lem stood erect and straight before the men who were to judge him, looking them squarely in the eyes, his bearing bespeaking a quiet trust. Yet he appeared to take the matter with proper seriousness. There was no attempt on his part to pretend a lightness he did not feel, or to seem indifferent. Not a man in the court looked at Lem without somehow feeling that the lad before him was innocent.

Yet appearances were decidedly against Lem. The instructor was the first witness. He first told of the lesson in harnessing, and how he thought Lem had hit the horse, but he was not able to produce any witness who had seen Lem strike the animal. Then he told what he had seen of the runaway, which really was not much.

The principal witness was Corporal Worthington. He was ordered to tell exactly what happened at the time he delivered the horse to Lem.

“As I was driving on my last round,” he said, “I

saw the Lieutenant coming and I knew that he must have been ordered to take his turn at the rake. As he was my superior officer I turned the rake around, to head it in the right direction. Then I noticed the horse's throat-latch was loose. I hopped off and buckled it. The Lieutenant got on the rake, picked up the lines and a switch, and started off. When he reached the bottom of the hollow, where he was out of sight, he hit the horse with his whip. The animal gave a jump and tore up the slope on the other side of the hollow. The Lieutenant couldn't stop the horse, which fell down when he tried to turn."

"You say the defendant hit the horse when he was out of sight," said a member of the Court. "How could you see him if he was out of sight?"

"I mean he was out of sight of everybody but me. And he would have been out of my sight if I hadn't stopped a moment to watch him. He probably thought I was out of sight, too."

"You have told us everything, have you?" asked another member of the Court. "The Lieutenant didn't do anything to the horse that you saw?"

"Not a thing. He climbed to the seat as soon as he reached the rake, picked up the lines and whip, and started off."

"How many times did he strike the horse?"

"Only once, sir. The animal never gave him a chance for another blow. Dobbin ran like a frightened deer."

The witness was dismissed. Lem was called upon to testify. He told a plain, straightforward story that was very similar to Corporal Worthington's.

"Then you admit striking the horse, do you?" asked one of the Judges.

"I do, sir," answered Lem, "but I think 'strike' is hardly the right word. I hardly more than touched the horse. Besides I had nothing but a tiny switch."

"Never mind about the size of the switch. You struck the horse. The animal ran away. He fell and broke a leg. Now the horse is dead," said the head of the Court. "The case seems to be complete. There is no need of further evidence."

The Judges conferred a moment. Then the head of the Court said, "We find you guilty of causing the death of the horse as charged. What you have done is not a crime and no civil action can lodge against you. But you are guilty of conduct not becoming an officer. Any person who would try to be revenged on a dumb brute because the animal had accidentally hurt him, is not worthy to be an officer in the United States Boys' Working Reserve. I am not certain that he is even fit to be a *member* of the Boys' Working Reserve. Although you are not amenable to civil law, we can and shall punish you under our own military law. Have you anything to say before sentence is pronounced?"

Lem arose and faced the Court. He had paled perceptibly. His face showed both perplexity and

anxiety. But before he could say a word the Secretary of the Y. M. C. A. came hustling into the tent, closely followed by Corporal Russell.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting," said the big secretary to the Court, "but I have some evidence in this case that I should like to present."

The head of the Court motioned for Lem to be seated. "Present your evidence," he said to the Secretary.

The latter turned and called Corporal Russell to the stand. He was sworn as a witness and told to relate his story.

"That horse never ran away because he was hit with a switch," he said indignantly. "He bolted because these were sticking in his shoulders," and he held out a number of bloody sand-burs.

"What do you mean? Where did you get them?" asked the astonished Judges.

"I got them from under the dead horse's collar. Those burs were put under Dobbin's collar to make him run away. The fellow who put them there sits in that chair." The witness turned and pointed directly to Corporal Worthington.

The accused lad turned as white as chalk. He tried to reply, but could make no sound.

"What evidence have you got that he did this?" asked the head of the Court.

"Evidence? The horse himself is the best witness. Any horse would have run away with those

things sticking in his shoulders. But this horse walked along so slowly when Corporal Worthington drove it that he got behind the rest of the rakes. When Worthington saw Lieutenant Haskins coming toward him, he turned the rake around, drove down into the hollow out of sight, and put those burs under the collar. When the Lieutenant reached him, he was buckling a strap on the bridle as a bluff. The Lieutenant got in the seat and picked up the lines. Worthington gave him a switch. He advised the Lieutenant to switch the horse because the animal went so slow. He meant to have Dobbin jump ahead as a whipped horse does, so the burs would stick into the shoulders and make him run away. The rake rolled down-hill itself and there was no pressure on the collar. But the minute the horse started up the other side, the burs stuck him and the horse ran away. It was the burs, sir, and not the switching that caused the trouble."

The judges were leaning forward in breathless attention. "What proof have you of this?" they demanded.

"Proof?" said Corporal Russell. "What more proof do you want? I found these burs in the dead horse's shoulders. They weren't there when Worthington was driving or the horse would have run away with him. They were there when Lieutenant Haskins started to drive. Hence they got there between the time Corporal Worthington left the rake and the

time Lieutenant Haskins got on it. Corporal Worthington put them there while he was pretending to buckle the throat-latch. If you want any more proof, look at the culprit."

Corporal Worthington sat with a face like a sheet, his eyes on the floor, visibly trembling.

"Corporal Worthington," said the chief Judge sternly, "is this charge true? Did you put these burs under the horse's collar?"

Corporal Worthington got to his feet. Twice he tried to speak and failed. Then "Lieutenant Haskins put the burs there himself," he said, faintly.

"You have already sworn," replied one of the Judges icily, "that after Lieutenant Haskins reached the rake, he at once got into the seat, picked up the reins, and started the horse. Were you lying then or are you lying now?"

Corporal Worthington stood open-mouthed and tongue-tied. His confusion was pitiful.

"I suggest that his pockets be examined," said the big secretary. "He didn't pick those burs up where he stopped the rake, for there weren't any there. If he put them under the collar, he must have had them in his pocket. If he did, some of them would be almost sure to stick fast."

"Search him," commanded the Court.

Attendants felt in Worthington's pockets.

"Ouch!" exclaimed one of them, and drew forth his hand with two sand-burs clinging to a finger.

"Exactly what I expected," said the Secretary. "I guess we hardly need any more proof." Then directly addressing the culprit, he said: "Worthington, I want you to confess that you put those burs under the horse's collar. There are more things we know about you that I am going to tell to the Court. Before I go on, I give you this chance to own your guilt. It will go easier with you if you tell the truth."

Worthington turned toward the Court, but his glance never lifted from the floor. "I did it," he said weakly.

"Where did you get those burs?" asked the Court.

"In a field about two miles up the valley."

"How could you? You were busy with your hay-making every minute."

"I got them on Sunday. The Captain took us for a hike there."

"It's a fact," said the Captain of Company B, "and I remember noticing sand-burs there."

"What! Did you get those burs on Sunday and bring them back with you expressly for this purpose?" demanded one of the Judges.

Worthington hesitated.

"Tell the truth," admonished the Judge.

"I—I—I thought I might want them for something of the sort."

"Well you *are* a villain," commented the Judge. "That's malice aforethought, beyond question."

"That isn't all," said the Y. M. C. A. Secretary.

"It seems that Lieutenant Haskins and Corporal Donnelly, who have several times been reprimanded for the condition of B Company street, have been making a special effort to win the blue ribbon for orderliness."

Both the Colonel and the Captain of B Company looked their astonishment.

"It now appears," continued the Secretary, "that their tents have been disarranged and the company street littered up after they were put in order. Please call Johnnie Lee. He's waiting outside."

Johnnie was ushered in. He told what he had overheard at the movie show and what he had done. When Johnnie had finished, the Secretary went on: "So this morning I watched. After all of you had marched off to work, and before the inspection was made, I saw several small ragamuffins who pretended to be playing catch. They threw their ball so it rolled into B Company street. They ran after it and on through the street. As they went, they littered the street with bits of paper from their pockets and disarranged several tents, paying particular attention to Corporal Donnelly's. Then they raced on to the parade-ground. Believing that they had not been seen, they stopped there to play ball. I knew the youngsters and after a while I asked them to come to my tent. Here I got the whole story from them. They've been doing this sort of thing right along. They got a dollar apiece every time they did it. That is the man who hired them."

The Secretary pointed to Worthington. Then he and the chief Judge withdrew to a corner of the tent, where the Secretary laid bare all that he had learned concerning conditions in Company B.

The Judge returned to his seat and conferred with his colleagues. Then he said: "Lieutenant Haskins, you are not only honorably discharged, but you have the hearty commendation of this Court. Your conduct has been above reproach. To your soldierly qualities, which have never been in doubt, you seem to add an unusual sense of honor and justice. For it now appears that you have really been persecuted by certain members of your company. Yet you have borne yourself with dignity and remarkable self-restraint. I congratulate you, sir, upon the record you have made."

Lem saluted the Judge. "I thank you, sir," he said, and would have added more, but a great lump arose in his throat and his eyes went misty. His heart was beating wildly with sheer joy. He was not merely vindicated. He had heard the words he had labored so steadfastly to win: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The trial, however, was not yet concluded. Corporal Worthington's case had now to be disposed of. The members of the Court conferred about it for a moment. Then the culprit was ordered to stand.

Corporal Worthington arose, with sagging shoulders and downcast eyes.

"Young man, said the head of the Court, "by your own admission you are guilty of one of the greatest wrongs a human being can commit against another. You have not only lied about your superior officer, but you have deliberately schemed to get him into trouble. Had it not been for the timely assistance of his friends and the Secretary here, Lieutenant Haskins would at the very least have been stripped of his office and disgraced. But the offense charged against him was as nothing compared to the crime of which you have been guilty. If demotion was a fair punishment for the thing we thought Lieutenant Haskins did, the very least that can be done to you is to expel you from the Boys' Working Reserve. Actually we ought to put you in the hands of the civil law, to which you are amenable, for you, sir, *have* committed a crime."

With supreme satisfaction Lem listened as the Judge continued to upbraid Worthington. A great anger had taken possession of Lem's heart at the revelation of his subordinate's treachery. But as the Judge went on talking, pouring out words that cut and burned and scorched, Lem began to feel sorry for the lad who had wronged him. No matter how bad the offense had been, it seemed to Lem, the punishment was almost more than any one should be compelled to bear. Then he thought of the day, years before, when at Camp Brady he had stood accused of a misdeed that might have resulted in the

death of a comrade. He recalled how hurt he had been at Captain Hardy's harsh words. He recalled how well he merited the reproof. And he also remembered how his Captain, instead of expelling him from the camp as he could very properly have done, had given him another chance and had encouraged him in the efforts that had made him what he now was. He saw that his case had been similar to that of Corporal Worthington's, except for the fact that his own misdeed had been due to carelessness, whereas Worthington's was due to studied effort. Still the situation was much the same. All that Lem was or hoped to be, he felt he should owe to his Captain for his leniency and help. Here, it seemed to Lem, was an opportunity to do as he had been done by. He might help to make a new man of his corporal, even as his captain had made a new man of him. He resolved to intercede for Worthington. He came out of his preoccupation barely in the nick of time. Already the Judge was saying, "It is the sentence of this Court that you be —"

"I beg your pardon," said Lem, springing to his feet, "but may I say a word before sentence is pronounced?"

"Speak up," said the Court.

"Then, sir, I ask you to be merciful. I do not believe Corporal Worthington is entirely at fault. I think, sir, he is merely the tool of others. Some of the boys from my own town do not like me, sir,

though I have given them no proper cause for this dislike. I believe they are at the bottom of this thing. At any rate, I am certain they are responsible for Corporal Worthington's feeling toward me. I ask you, therefore, to be merciful and to give Corporal Worthington another chance."

"You show a very fine spirit, Lieutenant Haskins," said the Judge. "The Court will consider your plea." Then turning to Corporal Worthington, the Judge said gravely, "What about this? Is it true that you are the tool of other persons, or are you entirely to blame for what has happened?"

Corporal Worthington hesitated. "I — I — I did it myself," he finally said, but no one in the tent believed him.

The lines about the Judge's mouth hardened. "Then, sir," he said, severely, "you must take the responsibility. The Court had intended to expel you from the Boys' Working Reserve, and to send you home in disgrace. In view of your superior officer's plea, and our belief, despite your testimony, that you are not altogether responsible, the Court will temper justice with mercy. You may continue in the Reserve, but you are reduced to the ranks. Attendant, remove the chevrons from the culprit's arms."

CHAPTER XIV

ANOTHER CLOUD ON THE HORIZON

THE news of the trial and its unexpected outcome set the training camp to buzzing like a beehive. Everybody in camp knew, of course, of the Anderson crowd's attempt to humiliate Lem at the Y. M. C. A. on the occasion of Tom Sheppard's interference. The outcome of the trial merely strengthened and deepened the feeling that had come to most of the boys in the regiment at that time. Their admiration and liking for Lem increased greatly. Their dislike of Anderson and his followers now not only increased, but took on an active form.

Previously most of them had been content to dislike Anderson passively. Now the boys began to show their dislike openly. They shunned the Anderson crew in a way that, while not quite so cutting as was Anderson's treatment of Lem at the Y. M. C. A. had been, was nevertheless very telling. Some even went further and improved every opportunity to say harsh things within earshot of Anderson or his friends. The regiment contained many lads like Tom Sheppard, so out-and-out honest themselves

that they hated treachery worse than they would have hated a poisonous snake. And these lads now expressed their opinions bluntly and without reservation. Thus, in a twinkling, the situation was entirely reversed. The biter was bitten; and the Anderson crowd found themselves in exactly the position they had schemed to put Lem in — detested and practically ostracized.

For though nothing had been proved against any one except Worthington, nobody doubted for a moment that Frank Anderson was the moving spirit in the plot against Lem, even if he did not actually think up and perform the deeds that had been uncovered. He had more money to spend, very evidently, than any other boy in the regiment; while Corporal Worthington was quite as evidently without funds. And Anderson's influence over Worthington was so marked that the latter had become in very truth a real satellite.

The effect of the trial on Lem's fortunes, on the other hand, was more than gratifying to the Lieutenant of Company B. In fact, he was almost embarrassed by the change in his fellows. He became the hero of the camp. The story of his quiet endurance of persecution, of his self-restraint, of his fairness toward those who had been trying to injure him, now became known in detail. There was not a fair-minded lad in the regiment who did not admire Lem in consequence. This admiration was pleasing to

Lem, of course; but more than the admiration he valued the deep and genuine respect that went with it. The regiment valued Lem, not so much for some deed he had done, as for what he was. This Lem felt and understood, and it brought to him a deeper satisfaction and a greater happiness than he had ever known before. For Lem understood that any one, under the spur of momentary influences, might perform a meritorious deed; but that no one could possess fineness of character without constant struggle toward that end.

Many a lad would have been spoiled by the attention that now came to Lem. But he had been through so much trouble himself, he had struggled so long to overcome his own weaknesses and to build up the strength of character that underlay all he had done, that he was very sane in his judgment. Once he had heard a workman remark, "A man who never makes mistakes, never makes anything else." He tried to bear in mind the fact that his own successes were built upon his own failures. And remembering that, he was charitable to Worthington.

He was so charitable, in fact, that many of his fellows could not understand him. Resentful as he felt at Worthington's treachery, officially he continued to treat him as he treated every other subordinate. And when he saw how Worthington was being punished for his wrong, he began to feel sorry for him. He had pleaded with the Court in Worthing-

ton's behalf. He thought that the least Worthington could do was to come to him now and express his contrition and his appreciation of Lem's attitude. So he waited awhile for Worthington to come. But Worthington made no advances. Lem was determined, if possible, to put an end to the hostility Worthington and his fellows cherished toward him. So one day he decided to take the matter into his own hands and go direct to his former corporal.

He found him with Frank Anderson in the latter's tent. Without waiting for them to speak, Lem entered the tent and said, "I came to see if you fellows won't make up with me. If I am willing to let bygones be bygones, you ought to be. There isn't any sense in fighting among ourselves when we have the whole German nation to fight. We've got to produce every ounce of food that can be raised, and we can't do that unless we all pull together. We came here for a patriotic purpose. For the sake of that purpose, won't you call it quits, shake hands with me, and forget what has happened?"

A look almost of friendliness crept over Worthington's face. He had suffered severely in consequence of the altered attitude of his fellows toward him. At heart he was not vicious. He was merely weak and had fallen completely under the influence of a more powerful nature. He had thought long over what had occurred. When he was away from Anderson he saw himself in a light that was almost truthful. In

those moments he felt sorry for what he had done. Also he was fair enough to recognize that Lem had acted with remarkable charity toward himself. In these lucid intervals he appreciated Lem's intercession in his behalf. Had Lem talked to Worthington alone, the chances are that the latter would have asked Lem's forgiveness, shaken hands with him, and faced about entirely. He seemed almost ready to do so now. But before Worthington could express what was in his mind, Anderson replied to Lem's greeting. His face was ugly to see. A hideous sneer distorted his lips.

"Shake hands with *you?*" he said with all the venom in his nature. "I'd sooner be hanged." Then, with an oath, he added, "You needn't think you can come here and crow over us just because you came out ahead this time. I told you once before that the fellow who laughs last laughs best. There's plenty of time for another laugh. We'll get you yet, blast you!"

The friendly look disappeared from Worthington's face as he listened to his leader. In its place came a scowl. He turned his back on Lem.

The latter was plainly disappointed. "Anderson," he said, a sterner note creeping into his voice, "you know very well that you have no reason to hate me. I have never done anything to you. I have never tried to hurt you. I *have* tried to treat you fairly. Do you really think I *wanted* to come here now and

risk being turned down? I did it because I place my country's needs above my own feelings. I thought you were man enough to do the same thing. It seems I am mistaken. I am sorry."

He turned and walked slowly back to his own tent. The glow that had come from his effort at self-mastery faded from his heart. The rosy hue that had tinted his thought of the immediate future vanished. That future still possessed unpleasant possibilities and Lem had to recognize that fact. Never before had he gone through an experience like that of the past fortnight. Other boys had disliked him. Other boys had said mean things about him. But never before had anybody attempted really to harm him. If Anderson or Worthington had succeeded in their plot, Lem would have been disgraced. That was all. But Lem now understood that Anderson would go to any lengths to get him into trouble and that such trouble might be a very real difficulty. He saw that Anderson would fasten on him, if he could, a deed that might wreck his entire life, that might even send him to a penitentiary. He believed that Anderson would even be willing to see him hanged, though innocent of any crime. And what was worse, he felt sure that Anderson would be capable of plotting to fasten some serious crime on him. He understood now that his enemy was without scruple, conscienceless, remorseless. Moreover, Anderson had wealth and influence, while he himself was poor and

almost friendless. No wonder that Lem's face paled a bit as he considered the future.

Then succeeded a tightening of the jaws and a look of determination, while the light of real courage shone in his eyes. A mind reader could have told that he had determined to do what was right, no matter whom he offended or what the possible consequences to himself.

But presently the sternness of his countenance was lightened by a look of relief. A smile stole over his face. "Here I am," he muttered to himself, "crossing a bridge before I get to it. In fact, I am crossing a bridge that doesn't exist. The training camp will end in a day or two. The regiment will break up into small units and be scattered all over the state. I probably shall not see Frank Anderson again all summer."

So he went his way smiling. But two days later the smile faded from his lips. An announcement was posted, telling where the different squads were to go to work. His immediate squad was assigned to a Liberty Camp in his own section of the state, and this camp of twenty-four boys included every lad from Central City.

CHAPTER XV

THE LIBERTY CAMP

BY the time the training camp was ended and the young soldiers of the soil were ready for work on the farms, the summer was well advanced. In groups large and small, and as individual workers, these patriotic youths were sent to many different parts of the state. Those who went as individuals, lived with the farmers they assisted, becoming for the time being members of their families. But those who went out in large groups were quartered in camps.

The Liberty Camp to which the Central City contingent was assigned was to be in charge of Mr. Howard Granby. He was a senior at State College, who had been rejected as an army volunteer because of defective vision. His eyesight, however, was the only thing about him that was below par. He was tall, broad-shouldered, strong as Atlas. He was one of the foremost athletes in his college. He could run like a deer. He held medals as a jumper. He was a football player of reputation. Mentally he was keen and alert. Furthermore, he had been a farm boy, and so was entirely familiar with the duties that

lay ahead of these youthful soldiers of the soil. But Mr. Granby's most valuable characteristic was his magnetism. His winning smile, his deep, penetrating voice, his virile presence, all combined to draw others to him. In no time, the leader of the camp was also its idol.

The district to which this particular group of young farmers had been sent was in a hilly region along the Susquehanna River. A thousand feet wide, this noble stream here swept through a tract of rich farming lands that sloped gently back to rounded foothills, behind which towered loftier ranges of mountains. Just beyond these mountains Central City was located. Here and there streams came down from the mountains, pushed their way between the intervening foothills, and meandered through the open farming lands to the big river. Near the centre of the district in which the Liberty boys were to work, such a creek came rushing down from the hills, gathering volume as each little tributary poured into it until, where it crossed the agricultural plain, it was a noble little stream. The water at its mouth, backed up by the water of the great river, lay deep and peaceful and smooth as a mirror. High banks and overarching trees shut out both sun and wind from this pleasant little estuary.

Just before it emerged from the hills, this stream had been dammed to provide water power for a nearby mill. Thus a second sheet of deep, smooth water

was formed. On either hand the hills rose sharply. But between the water and the hillside there was, on the right bank, a wide strip of grassy land, lightly shaded by tall, broad spreading elms. Save for the fact that no good drinking water was immediately at hand, the spot was ideal for a camp. The tall trees afforded just enough shade. Yet the breeze could blow uninterruptedly beneath them. The grass had been cropped as short as a lawn by cattle. The deep, smooth sheet of water afforded a place at the camper's very door for bathing, fishing, and boating. Futhermore, being just within the notch in the hills, the spot had all the appearance of being in some remote fastness in the mountains. If drinking water could be obtained, the spot would be all that heart could wish for. The campers would be by themselves, where they could molest no one and themselves be unmolested.

Mr. Granby had visited this spot during fishing trips. He had led his charges here immediately after the train reached the station, the tents and personal luggage being left behind. The boys were delighted with the place. They were sure it would be possible to find drinking water that was sufficiently near for convenience. At Mr. Granby's suggestion they set forth in pairs to search for the desired spring. Little Johnnie Lee and Tom Sheppard accidentally found themselves together, so they set off in company to hunt for the desired water.

"Let's go straight up-stream," suggested Tom, "and look for little brooks. If we find any we can trace them back to their sources and see whether the water is clean or not."

So up-stream they went. The little valley through which the stream ran was narrow. The mountains all about them were thickly wooded with second-growth timber. The bottom of the little valley was practically clear of underbrush. A thick sod covered the ground. For years cattle had grazed along the bank of the stream. This tended to keep the brush down and make the grass thrifty. So the margin of the stream was lined with a carpet of smooth turf. Lofty trees here and there, like those that shaded the proposed camping ground, offered bits of grateful shade. Certainly it was a most inviting little valley.

"Gee!" exclaimed Johnnie, after the two had walked a few hundred feet. "I do hope we find drinking water. This is a bully place for a camp."

They went on. The stream twisted and turned, following the folds of the hills. Except for the open, grassy bottom, the place had all the appearance of an isolated nook deep in a wilderness. On the camp side of the stream the ground lay level and smooth for a few rods. Then the hills rose abruptly, in places almost precipitously. Their sides were jagged rocks, rough hewn by wind and weather. In crannies and crevices grew tiny

wild flowers. On the opposite side of the stream the mountain ascended almost from the water's edge. But instead of rising sharply, the slope was at first very slight. It could be climbed rapidly. Farther up the side of the mountain the grade became steeper. The mountain differed from the precipitous hill on the camp side of the stream, also, in its formation. The hill consisted of towering ledges. The mountain was covered almost entirely with loose stones and boulders, which varied in size from little pebbles to rocks half as large as a house. So numerous were these loose stones, in fact, that a large area of the mountain-side contained no vegetation of any kind. There was nothing but a great gray-brown patch of the loose rocks, looking on the shoulder of the mountain as a patch of crushed rock looks on a highway. Indeed both Tom and Johnnie thought of the similarity.

"Looks as though some giant had come along with a whopping big load of stones and spread 'em on the side of the mountain, doesn't it?" said Johnnie.

"Yes," replied Tom, as he stood still for several moments, carefully examining the great stone patch. "That's a bad place to tackle," he continued. "We'll probably do some mountain climbing before we go home, but let me give you a tip. Don't try to climb to the top of this mountain by way of that stone pile."

"Why not?"

"Don't you see how smooth and well rounded most of the stones are? It wouldn't take much to set 'em rolling on that steep slope, just like coal rattling down a chute into a cellar. If anybody started 'em going, he'd almost certainly be mashed to a pulp, for the stones would roll on him and cover him. Besides, I'll bet that place is just full of rattlesnakes. It's exactly the kind of a place they like."

"Gee!" rejoined Johnnie. "I never thought about that. It sure would be some landslide, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," smiled Tom. "Only it would be all rocks."

They went on. Presently they came to a little brook running down the mountain-side. It was crystal clear and cold as ice.

"Just the thing we're after," said Tom.

They had passed the open, rocky part of the slope and reached a section of the mountain that was fairly well timbered. The little stream came rushing down among the trees, splashing over mossy rocks, and swirling in tiny pools under fern-fringed banks. They could trace the stream up the hill for a short distance only. Then it was lost to sight among the trees and rocks.

"If we could get across the creek," said Johnnie, "we could see where the brook comes from."

"We can," said Tom.

They began to look about for a crossing. Some distance up-stream they espied several rocks in the

bed of the creek. By leaping from one to another of these rocks they got across the stream dry-shod. Then they came back to the little brook and followed it up to its source. To the surprise of both boys, the spring from which it came was well up the slope of the mountain. Here the crystal water came bubbling up through white sand in a large U-shaped basin. Great hemlock trees towered overhead, making it cool and dark. The horse-shoe basin was fully three feet deep and several feet in diameter, so that it contained several hundred gallons of water.

"Isn't it a peach?" cried Johnnie enthusiastically.

"It sure is," agreed Tom. "It's about the finest spring I ever saw."

"It's too bad it isn't nearer to camp," sighed Johnnie, "so we could make use of it."

"Oh! We can use it all right, but we'd have to have some pipes to do it. I wonder if we can get them. The spring is so high that it would give us a fine pressure and we could run the pipe almost straight to —" He paused and listened. "I wonder how those fellows got over there," he said in astonishment. "I didn't notice any of our boys ahead of us, did you?"

"No," said Johnnie. "Let's see who they are."

At some distance away, but at about the same level on the slope of the hill, they had heard sounds indicating the presence of people. They started toward the place, making their way with some diffi-

culty along the steep shoulder of the mountain. But by clinging to trees and rocks, they made their way without getting below the level of the spring. Presently the ground ahead of them sloped sharply, and they saw that they were coming to a notch in the mountain.

"There's sure to be a stream running down that notch," said Tom. "Some of the boys must have found it. But our spring is so much nearer the camp that it will be more practicable."

Presently they caught sight of a brown streak ahead of them and in another moment they understood that it was a highway. They had come to a pass over the mountain. But as they drew nearer, they saw it was a highway little if ever used. The sides were overgrown with briars and bushes. The gutters were choked with vegetation. But the central part of the road, where vehicles would pass if there were any to pass, was now nothing better than a pathway of rock. All the earth had been washed away by heavy storms. Only the bare and jagged ribs of the earth were left. And this rocky way was so rough that it would be almost impossible for any vehicle to pass over it.

"Well," said Tom, after viewing the highway with astonishment. "I didn't know there was a road over the mountain here. And I don't believe many other people do. I live only a few miles away, but I never heard of this road. I suspect it is a very old

road that hasn't been used for years. Hello! Those aren't our fellows at all."

Several men were now visible along the road. One carried a surveyor's transit, another a vernier rod.

"A bunch of surveyors," said Johnnie. "Let's go see what they are doing."

The two boys made their way through the underbrush that lined the road and suddenly appeared on the abandoned highway. The surveying party looked at them in surprise, and also, it seemed, with some suspicion.

"Where did you come from?" the leader of the surveying party at once demanded, looking at them with such a piercing glance that little Johnnie was almost frightened.

"Oh! We belong to the Boys' Working Reserve," said Tom. "We've just come here to help the farmers in the valley."

"What are you going to do?" demanded the surveyor.

"Help farm, of course," said Tom. "We've come to help raise food to beat the Germans."

"Very good," smiled the man. "Where is your camp?"

Tom told him and his next question was, "How many of you are there?"

"Twenty-four boys and a leader."

"Who's your leader?"

"Mr. Howard Granby, from State College."

"Is he a farmer, or," the man hesitated slightly, "or an engineer perhaps, or what?" And he eyed Tom narrowly as he asked the question.

"He's a college student," said Tom. "I think he's studying law."

Tom was certain the man heaved a sigh. A smile spread over his face. "Well, enjoy yourselves," he said. "I remember how I used to like to go camping when I was your age. If I had time, I'd come down and visit your camp, but we're running up a telephone line for the government and it's a rush job. Uncle Sam wants those wires up at the first possible moment. So we'll likely not see you again. But good luck to you."

The boys said good-bye and struck down the mountain, following the old road. They passed several men of the surveying corps and nodded to them. Several pole holes had been dug, and a few poles lay along the road or in the woods close to the road. The notch through which the road ran curved farther and farther away from the camp.

"If we follow this road all the way to the creek," said Tom presently, "we'll be a dickens of a way from camp. Let's cut straight back across the shoulder of the mountain, the way we came."

They did so, scrambling along as fast as they could on the steep slope, slipping on pine and hemlock needles, tripping over roots and stones, but hastening to get the news of the spring to Mr. Granby as

soon as possible. Once they paused for breath. Behind them they distinctly heard the crackle of dry twigs. As they looked around, a dark form slipped behind a tree trunk.

"They're following us," said Johnnie.

"Surest thing you know," agreed Tom. "I could see that they were suspicious of us by the way the leader asked questions. It's likely that they think we're spies and they don't want to take any chances on our tampering with Uncle Sam's new telephone line. Well, let them follow us. They'll find out that we're true-blue."

They went on. At times they heard footsteps behind them and caught glimpses of the man who followed them. When they came in sight of the camp ground, they saw that Mr. Granby had had the luggage brought up. Tents were rising and the stars and stripes already floated aloft. The man who had been following them was apparently satisfied, for at sight of the camp he turned and retraced his steps.

"That's good," said Mr. Granby to the two boys who had at once reported to him. "Some of the other boys also found water, but none that seems as suitable as your spring. I happen to know a man near here who has several thousand feet of old pipe that he's going to use sometime for an overhead irrigation system. But I feel sure he won't have time to install the system this summer. If he doesn't, he will be willing to lend or to rent us the necessary pipe

if we get it and return it to him. I'll go to the nearest farmhouse and telephone him."

Half an hour later Mr. Granby returned and reported that they could have the pipes. The farmer for whom most of the boys were to work would begin to haul them at once. Within two hours the first load of pipes was on hand, piled neatly beside the creek, opposite the brook that came from the spring. A rude foot-bridge was hastily constructed, so that the little creek could be crossed with ease. Then, each carrying one or more lengths of pipe, according to his ability, the Liberty Camp boys began to push up the mountain toward the spring, like a line of ants carrying food to their nest. The intake pipe was plugged to prevent water from entering it. Far below the surface of the water it was thrust and anchored with heavy stones. Then a second length of pipe was screwed in place, and another and another. So the pipe line grew, length by length, as fast as the boys could carry up the pipe. Over rocks and stumps, now prone on the ground, now in air, the pipe line made its way straight toward camp. In due time it reached the creek. Lengths were added and the line extended across the little stream. Then on it went to camp, where the outlet end was fastened to a little tank, the overflow from which would run through a short spout directly into the creek. When all was ready, the signal was given, the boys at the spring basin removed the plug, the pure

water rushed into the pipe, and several minutes later, with a rush of wind and a gurgle, the living water shot from the end of the pipe into the tank. In a short time this was full. The water system was complete. Meantime the tents had been going up with a rush. The mess tent and the cook tent were raised, the stoves set up, a place for a camp-fire selected and ringed with stones, the luggage all put in place, and the camp was complete. The Liberty Camp boys were ready to take their places in the furrows of freedom.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FURROWS OF FREEDOM

THE morning sun, peeping over the shoulder of the hill at the little camp beside the creek, was scarcely earlier in his rising than were these young soldiers of the soil. Though military drill was no longer continued, and all the youthful farmers were now reduced to a common level, the bugle still blew to call them from their slumbers. And at this particular Liberty Camp it blew early, for Mr. Granby preached the doctrine that the early bird catches the worm, and practiced what he preached. So the camp was astir betimes.

Very pleasant it was to these town-bred lads to feel the freshness of the early morn, to drink in the fragrance of the scented air, to see the grass sparkle with the diamonds of dew. Some of them had never before experienced the exhilaration of life afield in the very early morning. Some of them tumbled, grumbling, from their cots at the call of the bugle. But once fairly awake, every lad in the camp felt the spirit of the new-born day. Shouting, they ran to the rude benches they had fashioned along the

creek margin, and here, with basins of water fresh caught from the spout on the tank, they washed the last remnants of sleepiness from their eyes.

Under Mr. Granby's leadership squads were quickly formed to attend to the usual camp duties. Some foraged for wood, chopped it into proper lengths, and stacked it under the protecting fly of the cook's tent. Some put the tents in order, rolling up the sides and spreading the blankets to air, as had been done at the training camp. Another squad assisted the cook, paring potatoes, fetching water, tending the fire, setting the table, and so on. The little valley rang with shouts and laughter, for it was a very happy group that bustled about in the early sunlight, preparatory to the first day of service in the furrows of freedom.

Well might these lads have felt exultant. They were needed and needed badly on the near-by farms; but they had come in time. A neighboring truck-farmer desperately needed help in weeding and cultivating his crops; and though these crops covered a relatively small area, they contained greater food value and represented more money value than many acres of ordinary field crops. Help the trucker had not been able to get. Help he now had to have or the resultant losses would be large. What was more, he needed skilled help. One skilled hand alone meant all the difference to this food producer between a successful and a ruinous

season; and to the country it meant the difference between the greatest possible food production and the loss of large amounts of foodstuffs. One man, one skilled man, was needed to plug this breach in the trenches of production. The Liberty Camp possessed such a helper. He was little Johnnie Lee. Very proud, indeed, was Johnnie when the situation was set forth by the trucker, and Johnnie himself was selected by Mr. Granby as the lad best fitted to meet the need. Johnnie had indeed made good as a puller of weeds.

Haying was still in progress on some of the farms and several boys were selected to help with this work. Another group went to assist in cultivating corn. Thus, in small units of two or three, the lads from Liberty Camp were scattered over the entire neighborhood. The largest group was assigned to assist the man who had hauled the pipes. His wheat harvest was ready to cut — acres and acres of it — and he, too, needed help at once to save the food he had produced. As harvesting is very heavy work, only the largest and strongest boys in camp were chosen for the task. So it came about that Lem, Charley Russell, Jimmy Donnelly, Tom Shepard, Frank Anderson, and Roger Branscome were among the harvest hands.

Breakfast over, the boys marched away to their respective posts. Fair, indeed, was the land of freedom in whose furrows they had come to toil. The

gently-sloping farm lands, backed by the towering mountains and reaching to the swelling river, presented a lovely picture as the little group of boys came marching through the notch in the foothills. The mountain formed a solid background of dark green. The bottom-lands were carpeted with a tapestry of rich colors — the yellow-bronze of ripe wheat, the vivid green of oats, the waving fields of young corn, the orchards in full leaf, the gray-brown of shorn hayfields, and the patches of fresh-plowed earth where buckwheat was to go. Here and there stood the farmhouses, dwarfed in size by the huge red barns that towered near them, and cosily flanked by orchards or set snugly among lofty pines or maples.

The farm where the wheat harvesters were to work was a large one. It stretched along the river for many hundred yards and extended entirely to the hills. One could not pass up or down the valley on that side of the river without crossing this farm. Both the railroad and the public highway cut through the property.

Happy, indeed, was Farmer Henderson when he espied the little group marching toward his wheat-field. For days he had been sadly worried concerning his crop. At first he was troubled because he knew not where or how to secure the necessary hands to harvest it. But later as the grain ripened and the straw dried, the fear of fire had oppressed him. The

wheat-field bordered the railroad track. Only the narrow railroad right of way separated the dried grain from the steel tracks where passed train after train, the locomotives all too often shooting glowing coals from their short stacks. On windless days, or days when the wind blew from its usual quarter, these sparks fell harmlessly on the stone-ballasted right of way, or in the green pasture on the opposite side of the track. But it needed only a change in the direction of the wind to spray the wheat-field with red-hot embers. While the wheat was still green this change of wind had more than once swept the sparks from the locomotives into the field. But there was nothing to burn easily. Now the straw was like tinder.

For days, therefore, Mr. Henderson had watched the wind and the wheat-field as a mother hen watches over her chicks. But the wind had held steadily in its accustomed quarter and no harm had resulted. Now there were signs of impending changes in the weather, which meant also a shift in the wind. Weather-wise, Farmer Henderson had sensed these changes on the preceding evening. Many times during the night he had been up looking out toward the endangered side of the wheat-field. But no damage had occurred, and though the wind was now plainly shifting to the threatening quarter, Mr. Henderson no longer felt alarmed. He knew the boys marching across his broad fields

would get the grain harvested before damage could occur. So he welcomed his young helpers with a heartiness altogether unexpected.

He, too, had been up early. In fact, his day's labors had begun before even the sun was abroad. Now everything was in readiness for immediate work. Two binders, to each of which three horses were harnessed, stood oiled and ready. The necessary implements — cradles, rakes, forks — had been carried to the wheat-field. The grain in the corners of the great field had been cradled, made into sheaves, and tossed aside. All was prepared for immediate work.

"I didn't open up anything but the corners with the cradle," said Mr. Henderson to Mr. Granby. "It would have taken too long to cradle all around the field. We'll open up with a binder. I want your boys to come along behind and set up the wheat."

Mr. Granby understood exactly what was to be done; but most of his followers did not. So he explained the plan to them.

"You see, boys," he said, "the wheat extends right up to the fences, so there's no place for the horses to walk except right in the grain. Usually farmers cut a path around the edge of a grainfield with a cradle, so the horses won't tramp the grain. There wasn't time for Mr. Henderson to do this, so he's going to drive his binder right through the

wheat. That will cut a path the same as the cradle would have cut it, but in the field the grain will be knocked down where the binder wheels and the horses' feet went through it. We are to take rakes and forks and follow the binder, setting the broken wheat up straight again so that the binder can cut it on the next round. This is the way to do it."

Mr. Henderson started his horses. The binder rolled into place, the gears were shifted, and with a tremendous rattle and roar the great machine began to cut and bind the ripe wheat. Mr. Granby seized a fork, and holding it wrong end first, slipped the end of the handle under the trampled grain and gently raised it upright. Slowly he walked behind the binder, at each step raising the trampled grain beside him. His followers immediately understood what was required of them, and grasping forks and rakes, some of them assisted in setting up the grain while others threw the sheaves to the side of the field. Thus a path was cleared around the outer edge of the field, and the trampled grain was raised so that the mower knives could cut it properly.

As Mr. Henderson drew up his team after completing the round of the field, he smiled with satisfaction. He had increased the distance between the wheat and the danger point by the width of his swath. The two binders, following one close behind the other, would triple the width of that protective belt in no time. And although the wind was now

squarely out of the wrong corner and coming fresher every minute, Mr. Henderson no longer felt alarmed. A few rounds with the binder would make the field absolutely safe.

"I want a good man to drive the other binder, Mr. Granby," said Mr. Henderson. "Have you a boy who can handle horses well?"

"I sure have," was the reply. Then, turning to Charley Russell, the camp leader said, "Take that binder, Charley, and be sure you cut clean. Mind you get your corners square."

Meantime Mr. Henderson was adjusting his sheaf carrier, which had been taken off when he opened the field. Now he clucked to his horses, they strained against their collars, and the ponderous binder began to roar. Charley started his team and followed close after his leader. His companions, under Mr. Granby's supervision, began to set the sheaves up in shocks. He showed them how to lean the sheaves against one another so they would stand securely, let the wind blow as it might, and how to cap the shocks with other sheaves, thatching them, as it were, against the rain. A pleasing sight was this harvest scene, with the great machines roaring in the distance like a multitude of locusts, the busy hands setting up the sheaves, and the little shocks begining to dot the field.

A peculiarly shaped field was this. At one end it was rectangular. The boundary along the other

end was irregular in shape. That corner of this end that lay nearest the railroad formed an acute angle. It made a difficult place to turn the binders. The field being so large, the distance around it was nearly a mile.

Steadily the work progressed. Along the crooked end of the field, across the shorter of the two sides, and then around the rectangular end Mr. Henderson drove his binder, smiling happily as he tilted the sheaf carrier and dropped the fat sheaves in piles. When he turned at the corners he looked back and saw that Charley was coming steadily behind him, cutting the grain straight and true, and dropping his sheaves beside the little piles Mr. Henderson himself had made, while the other harvesters pressed close behind the machines, erecting shock after shock. It was hot, with the typical heat of harvest days, but the heat this day was tempered by the wind which every moment blew fresher.

As Mr. Henderson completed his round of the field, coming down the long stretch beside the railway, a passenger train went rushing by. Anxiously Mr. Henderson watched to see whether or not any little columns of smoke would spring up in the wheat. But the train passed out of sight; no tell-tale smoke arose from the field, and Mr. Henderson smiled happily.

"I guess that settles it," he said to himself. "When this round is done, we shall have put such

a wide swath between the grain and the railroad that sparks can't possibly carry across." So he dismissed the matter from his mind.

He completed his round, turned at the sharp angle, and began his second round. Charley, delayed for a little by the breaking of his twine, had fallen far behind Mr. Henderson. Thanks to his training at State College he knew what to do. He rethreaded the needle, saw that the binding apparatus worked properly, and started on. He, too, made the sharp-angle turn and started across the field. The shock makers were at the far end of the field. Charley alone was near the sharp-angle corner. Again his twine went wrong. He stopped his team, climbed to the ground, and began to search for the end of the broken twine. A freight train came chugging by, puffing slowly up grade. By the roar of the engine Charley knew that the locomotive was under forced draught. But he gave no heed to the train, for he was half-way under the binder and in a trying position. He got the twine loose; once more he threaded his needle, and stepped free of the machine. A great puff of wind lifted his big straw hat and sent it flying into the wheat. Charley carefully edged after it, trying not to break down the grain. Before his eyes the wheat bent and rippled in the sharp wind, like wind-blown water. Charley reached his hat and bent to pick it up. Distinctly a whiff of smoke came to his nostrils. But it was not coal

smoke. It was smoke from burning straw. Charley straightened up as though he had been jabbed with a pitchfork. A single glance told him the entire story. Smoke was rising in the straw at the very point of the sharp-angled corner of the grain. Even as he looked, another gust of wind bent down the grain, and the smoke changed to a sheet of flame.

Charley's heart stood still. Mr. Henderson was now on the far side of the field. Charley's fellows were at the other end. All were hundreds of yards away. If the fire was to be put out, he must do it. There was no one to help. He leaped toward the blazing triangular corner. Another gust drove the flames, fan-shaped, deep into the wheat. One man could no longer beat out the fire. Besides, Charley had nothing to beat it out with. For a second he stood irresolute, trying to think. It was useless to call out. Against the noise of Mr. Henderson's binder and the thunder of the passing train, his voice would not have carried a hundred yards. If the wheat was to be saved, he saw that he must save it himself.

An idea came to him. Like a flash he sprang to his seat. He grabbed up whip and lines. Savagely he spun the startled horses around. Already they were becoming nervous at the smell of smoke. Throwing the machinery out of gear, he drove the horses furiously down the path he had just cut. At what he judged the proper distance from the

flames, now momentarily checked by a lull in the wind, he turned his horses into the grain, threw his machinery into gear, and drove straight across the triangle as fast as the mower would cut. He was trying to make a fire lane between the flames and the rest of the field. Before he was half-way across, the wind freshened and the flames again raced toward him. Mercilessly Charley drove his horses. The whip and the fire both excited them. They were hardly manageable. They tried to turn from the flames. Charley threw all his weight on the reins and held them straight.

On came the flames. Charley saw he had made his triangle too small. He should have started his fire-lane deeper in the wheat. There was nothing to do now but keep on. He dashed through the remaining grain and reached the side of the field bordering the track. There he whirled his horses again, heading them back into the grain. As he turned, he glanced toward his fellows. They were running wildly toward him. On the far side of the field he saw Mr. Henderson tearing straight toward him on a horse he had cut loose from his binder. For the first time Charley realized that the locomotive engineer was shrieking the alarm with his whistle. Help was coming, but Charley knew that he alone must save the wheat.

Back along the track he had made, doubling the width of his protective swath, Charley drove his now



Fast as he drove, it seemed as though the flames ran faster.

frantic team. It was useless to ply the whip. The difficulty was to hold the horses. With a quick twist of his wrist Charley flung his whip aside. Then, bracing his feet against the machine before him, Charley pulled on the reins with all his force. But his horses were now beyond control. Madly they tore through the wheat. Yet they responded to his guiding, and Charley held them straight to their course, held them there with the fire almost under their very bodies.

Behind him he dared not, could not, look. He prayed that his double swath was wide enough to check the flames. The single swath ahead of him he saw was not sufficient to stop them. Fast as he drove, the flames seemed to run faster. The contest narrowed to a race between the two forces — horse power and fire. If he could cross the field in time, if he could widen his swath before the flames reached the edge of it, Charley believed he could save the wheat. But could he do it?

Ahead of him the wind drove the flames ever faster. At the very end of his swath they were closest to the swath. Could he widen the swath before the flames reached the edge?

Furiously he drove. With all his power he held the horses true to their course. But fast as he drove, it seemed as though the flames ran faster. Then almost before he knew it, he was right in the midst of the fire. The very wheat he was cutting was

aflame. The next instant he had completed his swath.

He tried to turn his team to cut a third swath, but the horses were beyond control. The animal that had been nearest the flames was badly singed. It was snorting and quivering with terror. But Charley managed to guide the animals into the swath bordering the wheat. As he thundered along toward the opposite side of the field, perilously swaying and bouncing in his high seat, he took one rapid glance backward, despite the danger, then turned again and did his utmost to check the flying horses. What he saw in that instant's glance set his heart to beating joyously. Only a few points of flame had jumped his swath, and his comrades had arrived and were beating out those flames. The wheat was saved.

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT LEM OVERHEARD

THE racing team of horses had almost reached the other side of the field before Charley got them under control. He did not succeed in stopping them until he had arrived at the far edge of the wheat. Then he climbed from his seat, and holding the still trembling animals by their bridles, talked to them softly and gently, patting their shoulders and stroking their noses, and trying to calm them. In a very few minutes they were standing quietly, heads down, now feeling the fatigue of their tremendous efforts. Carefully Charley looked them over. None of the three seemed to be harmed. The animal that was singed looked bad, but Charley saw that the flesh was burned only in a few small spots. He knew the injuries would rapidly heal, that a new coat of hair would grow in, and that the horse would soon be as good as ever.

And now, when he was sure that everything was all right — that the wheat was safe and the animals sound — he suddenly fell a-trembling and became so weak he could hardly stand. The natural reaction

from his exciting contest with the flames had set in. Charlie had never felt that way before and did not understand it. He thought something was wrong with him. He believed he was about to be sick. His legs shook so that he could hardly stand, so he sat down on the ground. Then he stretched himself prone, and buried his face in his arms. In a very few minutes he began to feel better, but before he could get to his feet he heard footsteps, and then Farmer Henderson knelt beside him, gratitude and anxiety filling his eyes. When Mr. Henderson found that Charley was not hurt, he sighed with relief, and thanked him for saving the wheat. So deep was his emotion that his voice shook as he spoke.

"Young man," he said, "I don't know how I can ever thank you enough. There's close to two thousand dollars' worth of wheat in that field. If it had burned, I'd have been ruined. I was counting on that wheat to pay my mortgage that falls due this summer. I don't know how to thank you, young man, but you can have anything on this farm in reason that you want to ask for."

"Why, I didn't do anything," replied Charley, suddenly abashed. "I only tried to save the wheat. Any of the other fellows would have done the same thing."

"They might have tried, if they had had the brains to do it," commented Mr. Henderson, "but they

wouldn't have succeeded. I don't know yet how you made those animals do it. I doubt if I could have made them. You must be a natural horseman."

Charley smiled with pleasure. The compliment delighted him more than the farmer's thanks.

"I'm mighty glad you are satisfied," said Charley. "I'm glad for your sake the wheat is safe. And I'm glad for the hungry people in Europe. All the time I was racing with those flames I kept seeing the faces of hungry little Belgian children, and I knew I just had to save the wheat."

"Well, young man, you and your friends will always be welcome on this farm. We'll never forget this day and what you boys have done for us."

"I guess there's plenty left to do yet," said Charley with a smile. "I'd better be getting at it." And he climbed to his seat on the binder and started down the side of the field.

Soon Mr. Henderson was back on his own binder, and the two machines went round and round the field, ever drawing nearer and nearer to the centre, while the rest of the harvesters continued to set up shocks. By dinner time the waving wheat in the inner part of the field was surrounded by a wide belt of closely cut stubble, dotted with innumerable shocks.

When the farm bell rang out its welcome summons, the boys formed in a little column and marched off to camp. Mr. Henderson urged them to stay with

him, but it had been arranged that the boys should eat at camp, at least at the start. So the little company walked off briskly and speedily disappeared through the notch that led to the Liberty Camp. There they found dinner steaming on the table, and their comrades from other farms awaiting them. Under the cool shade of the lofty elms, and close beside the inviting creek, they ate their noonday meal and compared their experiences of the morning. But no one else had had, or was likely to have, as exciting an adventure as Charley's. He was the hero of the hour.

Suddenly the conversation was interrupted by a peculiar tapping sound. "Listen," exclaimed Johnnie Lee, who first heard the noise. "What's that?"

"Tap! tap! tap! Rat-a-tap, tap!" came the sound.

Every one ceased talking. In the sudden silence only the splash of the overflow from the tank, the whispering of leaves aloft, and the curious tapping sound were audible. Every one looked puzzled. Suddenly little Johnnie jumped from his seat and ran over to the pipe line from the spring.

"Here it is," he cried, laying his hand on the pipe. "You can hear it plain. Somebody must be hammering on the pipe. Maybe some of those surveyors are getting a drink at the spring."

The sound came intermittently and irregularly,

sometimes at infrequent intervals, and again in almost continuous taps. Now the sound was loud, now hardly audible.

"I wonder what they can be doing," said Johnnie.

"I don't believe it's those surveyors at all," said Tom Sheppard, after studying the noise intently. "I think it's most likely some of those large stones rolling down the mountain-side and striking the pipe as they pass over it."

"I believe you're right," said Johnnie. "That's exactly what it sounds like. But what do you suppose started 'em to rolling?"

"I don't know," rejoined Tom. "I've often seen stones roll down a bare patch like that. Maybe the high wind broke off a tree limb or blew down some dead tree and that started the thing. The wind's pretty strong up there on the mountain-side. You fellows want to be careful if you climb the mountain. Don't try to cross that stone pile. You'll set 'em rolling sure and they'll mash you."

The tapping ceased and the boys went on with their dinner. When they had eaten, they sat for a few minutes on the grassy bank of the creek, resting. Then they formed in line and marched back to their respective tasks.

The heat had become terrific. Under the cool shade by the cool water, they had not realized it. But when they emerged from the notch and marched across the bare, open fields, they felt as though they

were walking through some great oven. The sun poured down almost perpendicularly. Even the wind was hot. The very atmosphere quivered as heat waves rose incessantly from the baked earth.

"Take it easy, boys," called Mr. Granby, as his little command was about to split up. "Put some green leaves in your hats."

And walking to a fence-row, he set the example by placing within his big straw hat some large leaves from the scrub-oaks and sassafras bushes that had sprung up along the line. His comrades did likewise. Then, with laughing farewells, the various little groups went off to their respective tasks: Johnnie, to his weeding, others to their hay-making, and Mr. Granby and the larger boys to farmer Henderson's wheat-field.

Had those who smile at the term "soldier of the soil" been compelled to join the young recruits with Mr. Granby on that blazing summer day, they would never again have sneered at those patriots who toiled in the furrows of freedom. For toil they did. Down their faces ran little streams of perspiration. Soon dark spots appeared on their clothing, which spread and spread, as their garments soaked up the sweat, until the young harvesters were drenched from head to foot—literally and actually drenched with perspiration. With such excessive perspiration came weakness. Unaccustomed to the trying labor, the lads from the Liberty Camp fagged badly. Yet

they pluckily kept at their work, though Mr. Granby cautioned them to "take it easy," and more than once ordered a lad to stop for rest.

So magnetic was their leader that he had gained complete ascendancy over even the Anderson crowd. All morning long Frank and his two cronies, Roger and Clarence, had worked faithfully and well. But long-established selfishness is not to be overcome in a twinkling. When afternoon came, and the heat proved almost overpowering, this trio began to grumble. But they grumbled only among themselves. They had been shamed so many times that they did not now dare openly to show a yellow streak. They liked their new leader greatly; but, like every other lad in camp, they also entertained a wholesome fear of his anger. For Howard Granby's entire attitude showed that he would be a human thunderbolt if he were aroused. So they kept on working, but did as little as they could without drawing down a reproof upon themselves.

Mr. Granby noticed their indifference to their tasks, but not knowing them well, set it down to weariness. Presently he worked his way over to them.

"You three boys had better rest a bit," he said. "It won't do to get overheated. Go over there in the shade for a few moments."

Gladly the three obeyed. Dropping the sheaves they held, they made their way to the shelter indi-

cated. The irregular boundary of the field was formed by a little brook. Here and there trees were clustered on its margin. The thickest shade of all was cast by a group of trees in a near-by hollow. Thither the boys made their way. Seated on the ground beneath the trees, they were completely hidden from their comrades. Being out of sight, they remained there. The "few minutes" Mr. Granby had told them to rest soon passed, but they still sat in the shade. And they were still sitting there an hour later, though their comrades had meantime been toiling doggedly through the very hottest hour of the day. Mr. Granby did not notice that they had failed to return, and the other boys were too weary to think of anything except the work before them.

Meantime the weather changes foreseen by Mr. Henderson were rapidly coming about. Clouds that had gathered on the horizon earlier in the day were now overspreading the sky. Gradually the haze lessened the heat of the sun's rays. The sky became overcast. Evidently rain was at hand. To finish the harvest, or at least as great a part of it as possible, was now highly imperative. The grain was dead ripe. If it stood uncut much longer, it would shell out badly in handling, and many bushels would be lost. So Mr. Granby urged his followers to make a supreme effort, speaking to each boy as he reached him in his round of the field. But as the lads were scattered over the entire field, he did not notice that Anderson and his two comrades were still absent.

It seemed as though an ill fate still pursued Lem, for he alone discovered that they were missing. What was more, he was directly opposite the little cluster of trees under which they were sheltered when he made the discovery. He had seen them go thither and knew that Mr. Granby must have told them to go. He also knew they should long since have returned to the field. Carefully he looked at his fellow workers, to make certain that the three boys had not come back. They were nowhere visible. Their help was badly needed. Somebody ought to summon them. Lem did not want to tell Mr. Granby about their absence. That savored of talebearing. Besides it would be thought that he had done the thing out of spite. Apparently there was nothing to do but summon them himself. And though he was no longer in an official position, the habit of command still persisted. As Lem turned the matter over in his mind, it seemed to him that there was only one thing for him to do. He must go call the missing lads. He disliked the task, but his duty seemed to require this of him. Setting his teeth grimly, he made his way toward the sheltered hollow.

He heard the sound of voices before he came in sight of the lads he was after; and almost the first word that came to his ears made him pause. His own name had been spoken. For a moment he stood irresolute. He wanted to learn what was being said about him. Yet he did not like the idea of eaves-

dropping. He determined that he would walk boldly and briskly into the hollow, deliver his message, and come away at once. But the next snatch of conversation that came to his ears rooted him to the ground like a statue. The trio in the hollow were plotting to get him into trouble!

A great rage entered his heart. An almost uncontrollable desire to rush at his enemies and beat them took possession of him. But he gripped himself and tried to think what was the right thing to do. Nor was he long in deciding. Quickly he learned that the plot to harm him would also result in injury to Mr. Henderson and indirectly lead to the loss of foodstuffs. For Frank Anderson and his fellows were discussing how they could damage some of the necessary farming machinery in such a way that Lem would be suspected of committing the deed. The matter no longer concerned Lem alone. His duty was plain enough. He must find out all he could about the scheme and prevent its accomplishment. Without further hesitation he dropped to the ground, and wormed his way within easy ear-shot of the plotters. And there he remained until he had heard the last detail of the proposed plan. Then he hurriedly withdrew and went back to his task of shocking wheat, getting Jimmy Donnelly to summon the missing lads to their duty. So the harvest continued until the rain came, and the workers were driven, drenched and dripping, to the shelter of the farmhouse.

CHAPTER XVIII

A STARTLING DISCOVERY

ALL the following night rain fell in torrents. The countryside was turned into a sea of mud. The tiny trickles of water in the hollows became rushing streams. The brooks swelled to many times their normal size. The big creek became a raging river. Outdoor work of almost any sort was out of the question. The farmers did not have sufficient work indoors to employ all the boys from the Liberty Camp, and in consequence some of them had a holiday.

Among those left unemployed at camp was Lem. He was glad for the idle hours that had come to him. He wanted a chance to think things over, for he was sorely perplexed. If he took the matter to Mr. Granby and the latter should question Anderson and his friends, they would, of course, deny the charge. Then Lem would be open to the suspicion, at least, of having told a falsehood about them, for they would then have to abandon their plan. But Lem now understood Anderson too well to believe that he would give up his idea of revenge. Anderson had vowed he would have the "last laugh." That

meant he would continue his scheming until he succeeded in getting Lem into trouble. The wise thing, it seemed to Lem, was to let Frank believe his plot was undiscovered and to thwart him in the accomplishment of it. But that was more easily said than done. Lem decided to go for a walk and think the situation over carefully.

Fortunately he had a waterproof coat and overshoes. So he set out with little fear of the dripping bushes and the wet grass. He went straight up the little valley. At the point where the footbridge had been erected to carry the waterpipes across the creek, he paused in astonishment. The bridge had been swept away. He had not previously realized how much water had fallen during the night. It had been his intention to cross the bridge and climb up to the spring, for although Lem had helped to construct the pipe line, he had not been up to the spring itself.

"It's no use," he said to himself. "I can't cross here. I'll go on up where the road from the notch comes down that Tom Sheppard told us about. There ought to be a bridge where that road crosses this creek."

He went on, knocking little showers of sparkling rain-drops from the grass and bushes, thinking all the while what he ought to do with regard to Anderson. Lem did not like to tell Mr. Granby about the plot, for the latter would almost certainly watch the Anderson crowd so closely that they would take

alarm. So he decided to get Charley Russell to tell Mr. Henderson the exact situation — how personal jealousy and dislike had led to the difficulties at the training camp, and how Anderson had vowed he would be revenged. Then Mr. Henderson could be on his guard and could protect his machinery. That, above all things, was necessary; for with metal so scarce and so much needed for army use, it was well-nigh impossible to get new parts for any damaged machine. Thus the breaking of even a tiny cog-wheel might mean that an entire machine was crippled for the season; and that, in turn, might mean inability to harvest a crop.

So engrossed in thought was the lad that almost before he knew it, he had come to the point where the expected bridge should have been. From the contour of the mountain Lem saw that the old road must come down the notch opposite which he stood. He could even see the little stream, now a swollen torrent, coming down the notch and emptying into the creek. But nowhere was there visible any trace of either a road or a bridge. And not only was there no bridge, but there was no evidence that there had ever been a bridge.

“I don’t understand it,” said Lem to himself; “I’ll go upstream a little farther. Maybe I can find some way to get across.”

He did. Not more than two hundred yards upstream the floor of the little valley rose abruptly

several yards, and the stream flowed between steep and narrow banks. As luck would have it, a large elm tree, blown over by the preceding day's storm, had fallen directly across this narrow neck of the creek. This natural bridge offered a way to cross. Carefully balancing himself on the wet and slippery trunk, Lem edged his way across the flood. Then he went back along the other bank toward the notch in which the old road was located.

He came shortly to the little stream that poured down the bottom of the notch, yet he could see no trace of any road. So he started to ascend the notch, making his way with some difficulty up the wet and slippery slope, which was here thickly covered with brush and saplings. Up he went a hundred yards, then two hundred, and finally he climbed fully a quarter of a mile before glimpsing the road he was after. When at last he reached it, he found that it was not really a road at all, but a gullied skidway, down which, in seasons past, logs had been dragged. The rains of years had rushed down the trough thus formed, widening and deepening it until the resulting gash in the mountain very much resembled a washed out mountain road. The soil thus carried down the hill had evidently settled, in part at least, at the foot of the slope beside the creek; and in this deposit of good soil the saplings and brush he had penetrated had sprung up. Lem judged that the lumbering operations for which this skidway was made must

have been finished many years back, for the old stumps had almost rotted away and the second growth of timber was of good size. It was no wonder Tom Sheppard had never heard of the old road. To begin with, it wasn't a road at all, and probably neither horse nor log train had passed along it since Tom was born.

Having made up his mind as to the history of the little highway, Lem pushed on up the slope. As yet he saw no evidence of the surveyors' work. But presently he came to a prostrate telephone pole. Others lay along the way or in the woods close by, and some holes had been dug to put them in. Just now the holes were nearly full of water.

"This is a mighty queer place for a telephone-line," said Lem to himself, as he pushed on toward the summit. "It wouldn't seem strange if this was a real road, but it isn't. Telegraph and telephone-lines almost always follow the roads, or at least are put in accessible places. A telegraph wire doesn't have to run straight or follow an air-line. Now, what would they do this coming winter if this line broke and there were four feet of snow on this mountain? It gets deeper than that up here sometimes. I'll be switched if I can figure it out. But I suppose Uncle Sam knows what he is doing.

"There's another thing I don't understand," thought Lem. "Why don't they peel the poles? I never before saw telephone poles with the bark on."

After a time he looked about him. The skidway ended at the summit, and did not pass down the far slope of the mountain. So, too, Lem now noticed, did the telephone-line.

"I suppose they mean to chop out a way for it down this slope when they finish the line up the skidway," he said to himself. "Funny I don't see anything of them; but probably they think it's too wet to work."

He turned to retrace his steps. "That's funny," thought Lem. "They've run a ground-wire down that pole."

His sharp eye had detected four little wire threads leading down from the four wires aloft. The four little wires were twisted into one close to the junction of the pole and the cross-arm. But there Lem lost sight of them. Wondering, he stepped close to the pole. Now he saw that the bark had been slit longitudinally the entire length of the pole. It had been lifted, the twisted wires slipped underneath, and the bark tacked back in place again, so that the ground-wire ran underneath the bark from the cross-arm to the earth. A less observant eye would have failed entirely to see what Lem had discovered. But his interest in wireless telegraphy had made him observant of anything that had to do with the electric transmission of messages.

"I wonder how it's grounded," he thought.

He looked, but saw no grounding iron. Then Lem noticed that some one had dug a little trench lead-

ing straight away from the base of the pole. To be sure, it had been covered up and skilfully smoothed over, and the rain had beaten it down. But the colors of the upturned subsoil indicated the line of trench. It went straight across the skidway and into the woods. Lem followed the line for a few yards.

"I'm going to see what's in this trench," he said to himself.

He dropped to his knees and with a piece of a branch began to dig up the rain-softened earth. He dug down fully a foot before he found anything unusual. Then his improvised shovel caught on something that felt like a thin root. Grasping the supposed root with his fingers, Lem was astonished to feel a twist in it. Gently he pulled it into sight. What he had hold of was a twisted and well insulated wire. Instantly he recalled how the German dynamiters had concealed their wireless in similar fashion at the Elk City reservoir. With trembling hands he covered up the wire, filled the trench, and removed all marks of his work. Then he hastened back to the skidway. There he took a closer look at the telephone-line. And now he discovered what had previously escaped his notice. The wires between the last two poles in the line were insulated from the wires farther down the line and cleverly united at each end by fine wires lying close along the cross-arms of the poles.

Almost too astonished for words, Lem stood look-

ing aloft for a full half minute. Then he exclaimed softly, "What do you think of that! As pretty a wireless aerial as ever you saw."

Again he looked around in silent astonishment, busy with his thoughts. After a time he said, "It's as plain as daylight now. The bark was left on those poles purposely so they wouldn't be noticeable. This isn't any telephone-line at all. It's a radio outfit. The wire I dug up leads to the transmitting instruments. Somewhere on this mountain-side there must be a cave or a hidden hut."

Again Lem looked aloft. "Who ever would have guessed it?" he muttered to himself. "It's the cleverest thing I ever heard of. Any one who ran across them would have believed them just as we did. But I'll bet my head that those men aren't Uncle Sam's surveyors at all. They're German spies and this is their wireless outfit."

CHAPTER XIX

BREAKING THE JAM

SO amazed was Lem at his discovery that he hardly knew what to do. But after a moment he recovered his poise and began to think the situation over calmly. He had not a particle of doubt that the four wires in front of him, stretched between the last two poles in the line, constituted a wireless aerial. Practically this stood at the very summit of the mountain. Located in such a secluded spot, the chance of discovery was almost nil. Only by the merest accident had its existence become known. The secrecy of the plan made Lem certain that there was something wrong about it. Uncle Sam would have no reason to hide a radio outfit in this fashion. The longer Lem considered the matter, the more certain he became that this was an enemy alien wireless plant. The circumstances were too similar to the situation that had existed at the Elk City reservoir to permit any doubt.

Satisfied as to the nature of the outfit, Lem began to consider what he ought to do. He felt certain that he had not been discovered, and he knew it was

of the utmost importance that he should remain undetected. So long as the spies — if spies they really were — thought that they were undiscovered, they would go forward with their work. Then they could be watched and captured, just as the dynamiters had been caught at Elk City. Also Lem knew that he must tell Mr. Granby at once; so he began to make his way cautiously down the mountain. He was very careful where he stepped, walking so far as possible on the leaves where he would leave no noticeable footprint, or stepping along on the bare rocks in the path.

Almost before he knew it Lem reached the foot of the mountain and turned up-stream to seek the fallen tree on which he had crossed. With surprise he noticed that the creek was considerably higher than it had been when he last saw it. Then he had walked along the narrow level margin that fringed the stream. But now he had to pick his way along on the sloping foot of the hill. When he reached the fallen tree, where the creek ran between high and narrow banks, he was amazed; for, not being able to spread out, the stream had risen until the water almost touched the prostrate tree. Already it was eddying around its butt, sucking away at its roots, and little by little tearing away the rain-softened ground that still held their landward ends. In fact, the spreading base of the great tree was already awash, and in the rush of the current the old elm was beginning to quiver.

Lem examined the situation carefully before trusting himself on the treacherous foot-bridge. His weight might complete the work of the stream and tear the few roots that remained unbroken entirely free from the supporting bank. Then the great butt would sink into the flood, the tree be snatched into the torrent, and Lem himself engulfed with it. Cautiously, therefore, he tested the matter, putting only part of his weight on the tree butt at first. When he found it held, he stepped on the great butt, freed his feet of all entangling rootlets, took a good look before him, and ran swiftly across the quivering trunk. A second after his foot touched land, there was a tremendous splash behind him, the great butt slid into the stream, the tree top suddenly rose upward, and Lem barely had time to dive to the ground and free himself from the entangling branches before the great tree was dragged backward into the flood, the spreading branches raking Lem like a harrow, as the noble elm was engulfed and dragged down by the raging torrent.

Lem picked himself up and looked at the roaring river. He was pale and his heart was beating like a trip-hammer. As he looked at the wild waves, heard the crashing of the rapids, saw the great, sucking swirls rush by, he realized as he never had before the awful power of water. And he realized, too, how narrow had been his escape. To be sure, Lem could swim; but whether he could swim in such a torrent

he knew not. And he felt almost certain that had he been drawn down with the tree, its terrible arms, whirling over and over in the water, would have clubbed him into insensibility. Now he understood the full meaning of what Al Jordan, their old cook at Camp Brady, had done in breaking up a log jam when it was almost certain he would be engulfed in the resulting rush of logs, and when he had had a leg pinched off by two sawlogs. If being entrapped in a tree top seemed so terrible, what would it be to be caught among hundreds of wildly tossing sawlogs! Lem shuddered at the thought and turned away from the stream.

Pulling himself together, he sped along the bank of the creek. But the high water greatly hindered his progress. Where he had previously walked on the flat, level turf, with nothing but the dripping grass to wet him, the turbid river now rolled, in places two feet deep. So Lem had to hug the foot of the hill, and in places where this was precipitous, even to wade in the water.

Lem knew that the camp stood on slightly higher ground, but he believed that by this time the water would be well up to the camp site. The boys, he knew, would be hurrying to get the tents and bedding and furniture moved to higher ground before the water reached them. If the creek continued to rise as it had been rising, every hand would be needed to get things moved in time. That meant that he

was needed. So Lem broke into a sharp run, still skirting the hill and splashing through the water in the low places. When he came in sight of the camp, he saw, to his astonishment, that the place was deserted. Not a soul was in sight. And though the water had not yet risen above the camp site, it was perilously close to it. For a moment Lem was dumbfounded. Then he understood. Something serious had happened. All hands had been called away. He must be needed, too. With redoubled energy Lem dashed on down the valley, forgetting the perilous situation of the camp in his speculations as to what might have happened. Whatever it was, Lem felt sure it had to do with the flood.

Once past the foothills that shut in the camp, Lem saw immediately where the trouble was. Half-way to the river, perhaps, he saw a group of men and boys beside the creek. He could tell that they were working desperately at something, though he could not distinguish what it was. He ran as fast as he could go. As he drew near, he slackened his pace to recover his breath. And now he saw plainly enough what was wrong.

The fields bordering the creek at this point were low. One contained Mr. Henderson's oats. The other was the corn field of a neighbor, Mr. Rawlins. Barbed wire fences here ran at right angles to the creek, extending on each side entirely to the water's edge. Some trees had sprung up along these fence-

rows, and at the end of each fence, on the sloping bank of the creek, stood a little cluster of good-sized oaks. Midway of the stream and almost between these groups of trees was an enormous boulder, half as big as a house. In ordinary water it towered many feet above the current. Now its top was barely visible. Caught between this boulder and the trees on Mr. Henderson's side of the creek was the little foot-bridge that had been built when the pipe line was laid. Between the trees on Mr. Rawlins' and this central boulder an uprooted oak-tree was wedged, its broken arms jammed tight around the midstream boulder, its great butt held firmly by the creek-side trees. Débris of every sort was packed and jammed behind these two obstructions. Sawlogs, broken limbs of trees, old boxes, pieces of board, planks, fence rails, posts, uprooted saplings, and a multitude of other objects were here lodged in inextricable confusion. Some of the current had sucked downward, so that only their tops stood out of water. Others had been thrown bodily upward and almost clear of the stream. Great planks stood on end. Some sawlogs had been driven half through the pile. The entire mass was jammed and pinned and woven together so solidly it seemed as though it would be impossible ever to get the pieces separated. From the bed of the creek to a point well above the water this mass extended, held by the foot-bridge on one side and the great tree on the other, thus damming the creek like a flood-gate.

Nor was this all. As the stream rose and the water began to back up over the banks, floating débris was carried to right and left and solidly jammed against the wire fences. With every minute the size of the obstruction grew and with every minute the rush of water came stronger. For the flood had not yet reached its crest.

All this Lem saw at a glance as he picked his way through the flooded field toward the group at the danger point. For danger point it was. Unless the jam could be broken, the rising water would sooner or later sweep through one field or the other. As it was, both crops were endangered. In either field the flood was now running over the bare ground. As yet it was hardly more than ankle-deep. But every minute the water was rising. And every inch it rose increased the danger. Little by little the top-soil, the richest and best part of the fertile land, was swirling away down-stream as mud. With every inch that the flood deepened, the current tore harder at the loose earth. Already both fields were flooded hundreds of feet back from the water's edge. It needed only a slight additional rise to cover them completely. Then both the oats and the corn would be under water. The rushing current would break down the oats, bury the straw and grain under the mud, and cause a total loss of the crop. The corn, too, would be seriously endangered.

The key to the entire situation lay in the tree and

the foot-bridge. Could one or both be moved, the mass of débris would be swept down-stream, the water would recede, and the danger be averted. But to remove either obstructing bar was both difficult and dangerous. The tree was a massive oak, as hard as iron. The foot-bridge was made of two good-sized logs, one of which was now buried beneath the water. Men were chopping at both obstructions as Lem came up, and some of his comrades were wading about in the water in the fields, trying to remove the obstructing materials from the wire fences. The larger boys were at work on the shore ends of the obstructions, and Lem saw that they were taking turns with the men in wielding the axes.

Lem reported at once to his leader. "I'm fresh, sir," he said. "Let me take a hand at an axe."

"All right," said Mr. Granby, resuming his chopping. "You relieve Jimmy."

Lem took the axe and fell to work. Mr. Granby was chopping at the end of the foot-bridge next to the midstream boulder. On the other side of the boulder Mr. Henderson and Mr. Rawlins were at work.

"Chop! chop! chop!" went the axes. The chips flew to right and left. How Lem blessed the day he had spent chopping wood at State College! He knew how to drive his blade deep and true. He understood just how great an angle to give each stroke to get the most out of his swing. He was strong, and

what was more, he was long and rangy. He could drive his axe with terrific force. He put his whole heart into his work. Every stroke went true and his steel bit deeper and deeper into the log. Stroke for stroke he kept pace with the men beside him. But Mr. Granby had the start and cut through his end of the log first.

"Look out!" he called. "I'm through."

Lem stepped on the shoreward end of the log and continued his chopping. In a few minutes he, too, finished his cut, and the top log of the foot-bridge was loose. Even so, the débris was so tightly jammed about it that the log could not at first be loosened. Only by hard and difficult work did they succeed in getting it free. Then it went whirling down-stream, while the choppers bent their attention to getting its submerged fellow loose.

This second log was well under water. The shoreward end was embedded in the creek bank far below the surface of the stream. The other end was lodged against the rock, but was slightly submerged. A rope was passed under this end and worked up through the débris. But the choppers might as well have tried to pull the mountain as to budge the log. Thousands of gallons of water pressing against this obstruction held the log in its place as firmly as though it had been riveted there. Mr. Granby seized an axe and tried to chop the log but gave it up. The log was too far under water for effective work.

Stepping to the rock, he called across to Mr. Henderson.

“Got a one-man cross-cut saw?”

His shouted words barely carried above the roar of the flood, but Mr. Henderson caught his question, and cupping his hands to his mouth, shouted back his answer.

“Run to the shed, Jimmy,” yelled Mr. Granby, “and bring the little cross-cut saw.”

Jimmy darted off through the flooded oats field, making astonishing speed under the circumstances. While he was gone, Lem got his breath and took another look at the situation. Even since his arrival the stream had risen appreciably. The water flowing over the fields, that had run with gentle flow when he arrived, was now sweeping over them in turbulent ripples, and digging deeper and deeper into the soil. His fellows still labored to remove the obstructions from the fences. When he came they had stood ankle-deep. Now they were in water half-way to their knees. Lem looked at the mass he was trying to free. It had grown appreciably larger. Every minute sticks and stumps and boards and other pieces of driftwood were added to the barrier. As it grew thicker, it held the water back more effectively. And as the pressure increased, the mass creaked and groaned and moved in a manner sinister and terrifying. Lem could not help thinking of the fate he had escaped when he crossed the creek on the

fallen elm, and of the terrible experience of Al Jordan when he broke the log jam. He shuddered at the thought, for should the mass behind him move forward before he could escape, he might be ground to pieces.

Then Jimmy came back with the saw. It had to be gotten from the shore to the midstream end of the log. Lem started after it, walking on the submerged log. But as that sloped downward, the water speedily grew deep. So he crawled gingerly on the pile of débris and as gingerly continued on his way. The mass creaked and groaned, and try as he would, Lem could not keep from his heart the fear that the barrier would suddenly break and he would be engulfed. But he made the journey in safety, bringing the saw back with him.

Mr. Granby at once set to work to cut the log near the boulder. He had to saw up and down, like a man cutting ice. The wet wood cut hard. To make the saw bite into it, he had to throw all his power into each stroke. It was exhausting work. After a very short trick at the saw he called upon Lem to relieve him, for it was essential that the saw be kept going at top speed. Ever the water was creeping higher. So they sawed, first one and then the other, in short tricks. An inch they cut into the submerged log, then two inches, then three. It seemed to Lem that the task would never end, — the wood was so hard, the saw cut so slowly, the effort at every stroke was so intense.

In his rest periods Lem watched the men at work on the oak. They were making even slower progress than he and Mr. Granby were. If the jam were broken, Lem felt sure it would be broken on his side of the boulder.

And now, with every passing moment, the pile of débris creaked and groaned the louder. It writhed under the pressure of the current. To Lem it seemed like an aggregation of some awful beasts of prey, waiting for the chase, and fuming at their detention. And presently he conceived the idea that the logs at his back were waiting to spring on him.

He stood on the rock watching Mr. Granby as the latter sawed steadily away. Suddenly there was a crack. The log began to part. The mass quivered.

"Ashore with you, quick!" shouted Mr. Granby, leaping toward the land.

Lem sprang after him but paused midway. The mass had settled down. The motion had ceased. The jam had not broken. The log still held. A few more saw cuts were necessary.

White-faced, Lem stood on the quivering mass. He knew he ought to go back, but the awful fear of the logs held him. He tried to get a grip on himself, but he could think of nothing but that terrible mass of logs pounding him to a pulp. He seemed paralyzed, unable to move.

Then an agonized voice thundered above the flood. "For God's sake, hurry! She's cutting through the field!"



Lem put every ounce of power into his strokes.

Farmer Henderson had seen what nobody else had noticed. The creek was beginning to make a new channel for itself. If it succeeded, not only his crops but acres and acres of Mr. Henderson's best land would be lost.

The cry roused Lem like an electric shock. His hesitation fell from him like a cloak. He crushed down his fear and leaped back to the rock. He knew that when the mass started, it would sweep over the rock and perhaps take him with it. But his duty was plain.

Like a flash he picked up the abandoned saw, planted himself firmly over the log and put every ounce of power into his strokes. "Rip! Rip! Rip!" went the saw.

Under his feet Lem felt the mass quiver and tremble for the leap.

"Rip! Rip! Rip!" sang the saw again.

The quiver increased. The mass behind him shivered and groaned.

"Rip! "

With a crash the log broke, the pile moved convulsively, and then the whole mass seemed to leap at Lem. But he was quicker than the stream. Like lightning he dropped the saw and sprang for the solid oak on the other side of the rock. Even as he leaped, the grinding mass shot forward and surged past the rock. Planks were hurled clear over it. Sawlogs knocked together hard enough to break a tree in

half. With a power incalculable the mass rolled and twisted and writhed under the force of the current. It would have ground any living thing to pulp. But Lem was safe. He cleared the rock as the first logs shot over it, ran like a startled deer across the still solid oak and reached the farther bank. He had broken the jam. He had saved the farm.

CHAPTER XX

A WET WEATHER PICNIC

WITH a terrific roar and crash half of the obstructing mass of débris swept through the opened passageway and went whirling down-stream. Rapidly the water receded from the fields, until soon the stream was entirely within its banks. A hasty examination showed that the damage inflicted was much less than had been anticipated. The jam had been broken in time.

As soon as he was assured that his field was safe and his oats not badly injured, Mr. Henderson came straightway to Lem.

"Young man," he said, as he wrung Lem's hand, "I wasn't very keen about having a lot of school-boys work here, and I took you on only because I couldn't get another living soul. But no set of men could have done me more service. You boys have saved both my wheat and my oats. I shall never forget what you have done for me. And I want to say that you are one of the bravest lads I ever saw."

Lem grasped with pleasure Mr. Henderson's extended hand and returned his strong pressure. "I

am glad we saved your grain, Mr. Henderson," he said, "but I am not as brave as you think. I was more afraid of that jam than I ever was of anything in my life before."

"If you were afraid and still did what you did, then what I said is true. You are a brave boy. The finest kind of bravery is the kind that overcomes fear."

Lem was embarrassed by Mr. Henderson's praise, and Mr. Henderson saw it. So he said no more about the matter. Instead he turned toward the remaining half of the jam, the mass of débris still held back by the tree trunk.

"We won't attempt to cut it now," he said. "There's no use running unnecessary risk. When the creek gets back to its normal height we can saw the tree and get some good fire-wood out of it."

"What are we to do to-day?" asked Lem.

"Things are too wet to do anything out-of-doors," said Mr. Henderson, "and just now there isn't much to do indoors. How would you boys like to have a wet weather picnic?"

"We'd like it fine," laughed Lem, "though I really do not know exactly what a 'wet weather picnic' is."

"Well," said Mr. Henderson, "we'll have the women pack us some grub and we'll go down to the river and bob for eels. It's pretty near time for 'em to begin to run and they ought to bite good in this muddy water. We'll go get some worms the first thing. You tell the other boys."

Lem soon communicated the good news to his fellows and there was a rush for the barnyard to dig worms. While some of the boys were securing bait, Lem and Charley went to cut sticks to bob with. They obtained a number of little poles that either curved semicircularly at one end or had curving branches. While they were searching for the sticks, Lem asked Charley if he had yet told Mr. Henderson about the plot to ruin some of the machinery.

"No," said Charley, "but I'll tell him on this very trip."

"Don't forget," cautioned Lem. "I don't want his machines injured, and after what he said to me a while ago I'd hate like sixty to have anything happen to make him think I could do such a trick."

When they had secured enough sticks of the proper size and shape, Lem and Charley went to the barnyard to see how the worm diggers were progressing. Meantime Mrs. Henderson had been packing a substantial lunch.

When all was in readiness, the party made their way to the fine, broad estuary of the creek. On this sheltered sheet of water Mr. Henderson and his neighbors kept their boats. These had been drawn out on the shore when the creek had started to rise and so had escaped damage by the rush of logs. Now they were emptied of water and put overboard. There were enough boats to accommodate the entire party. Good oarsmen were selected for each boat,

and the little flotilla pushed out of the estuary into the great river.

Evidently the rain had been general, for the Susquehanna, too, was swollen and muddy. It was no longer a stream of shining water, but a great river of mud. No longer through its crystal waters could one see the stony bed over which it swept. Every creek and rivulet for miles around had been pouring into it a muddy flood. And the resemblance to coffee was heightened by the bubbling, boiling, swirling current. Yet the river was not so swollen as to make it unsafe to venture on it. The great stream still rolled deep within its high bluff-like banks. But for catching eels the conditions were perfect.

The little flotilla made its way along the shore, since it was impossible to bob for eels in very deep water. At Mr. Henderson's suggestion the boats anchored, one at a time, until the fleet was strung out over a space of several hundred yards. The oars were shipped and the fishermen prepared for business.

The bobs had been prepared before the boys entered the boats, the worms being strung on long threads and the threads wrapped in little loops or rosettes, which were fastened so that they dangled a few inches from the ends of the sticks. These sticks had of necessity to be short.

Now each boy lowered his stick until the end touched the river bed. That allowed the ball of

worms to lie on the bottom a few inches from the stick. Some of the boys had never before fished for eels in this way.

"How shall I know when I get a bite?" demanded little Johnnie Lee, who was new to the game.

"How do you know when you get a bite at any time?" replied Tom Sheppard. "You'll know, all right. You just jerk up your bait when you feel something pulling on it."

"But what's to catch the eel if he does bite?" asked Johnnie. "There's no hook to hold him."

"That's where the fun comes in," said Tom. "His teeth will catch in the threads and hold him for a second or two. You've got to get him into the boat before he gets loose."

"Gee!" yelled Johnnie. "There's a bite now."

He jerked his stick out of water so savagely that he tore the looped thread fairly out of the mouth of a big eel that dropped from his lure and splashed back into the muddy river. Johnnie began to lament.

"Forget it and try again," advised Tom. "Don't be so savage next time. Just lift your eel — that way."

As he spoke he raised his stick swiftly but smoothly and swung it over the boat. A two-pound eel dropped fairly in the craft.

"See how it's done?" laughed Tom. "Just as easy as pie."

It was anything but easy to subdue the eel, once it was landed. Their boat had low sides. There was still some water in its bottom. The uninjured eel glanced about the craft like a streak of lightning. Everybody was afraid it would get over the side and be lost. The scramble to capture the creature threatened to upset the boat. Four boys were in the boat and each one clutched desperately at the slippery eel as it squirmed past his feet, streaking from one end of the boat to the other. Finally Tom grabbed it with a piece of old rag, and squeezing it tight, lifted and dropped it into a burlap bag.

"Hurrah!" shouted Johnnie. "This is more fun than a bushel of monkeys. Here goes for another."

The boat quieted down and four sticks were again thrust over the sides. Presently George Martin lifted an eel aboard. Its teeth were so tangled in the threads that it could not immediately shake itself loose. Quick as a flash Tom opened the sack and held it under the eel. George lifted the creature to lower it into the bag. The eel gave a tremendous flop which loosened its teeth from the threads and at the same time flung itself fairly over the side of the boat. George was wide-eyed with astonishment.

"Well, I'll be switched," he said. "What do you think of that?"

"I think," said Tom laughing, "that you'll learn, like Johnnie. Next time slide him into your bag instead of lifting him up. You give an eel an inch and he'll take several rods."

"Well," said little Johnnie, who was somewhat consoled by George's misfortune, "the team is batting better than three hundred, anyway. That ain't a bad average."

"We'll have to bat better than that," said Tom, "if we are going to lead this league."

Sounds coming from other boats indicated the truth of Tom's remarks. In one boat after another arose a little uproar as the first eel was brought aboard.

Presently Mr. Granby's deep voice came echoing over the water.

"If you want to catch any eels, you fellows will have to keep quiet, particularly with your feet and your bobbing sticks."

The flotilla was suddenly silent. Now and then little commotions were heard in this boat or that, and the sound of suppressed laughter frequently floated over the water. But for the most part the little fleet now fished in silence. When Mr. Henderson said the eels ought to be running he told the truth. Either they had already started, or were about to start, their fall pilgrimage to the sea. Seemingly the river was full of them. They were plump and fat and just prime for eating. First one boat and then another landed an eel. With twenty-six fisherman the count ran up rapidly. By the time they were tired of the sport, probably seventy-five eels had been taken and a great many more had been lost.

Then Mr. Henderson gave the signal to lift anchor. He led the way and the five other boats dropped into line behind him. Thus the little fleet made its way back to the sheltered estuary. The boys were glad to get there, for by this time the skies were clear again and the summer sun was pouring down hotly.

Long before this all the driftwood had been swept from the mouth of the little creek. The river, gradually rising, had checked the rapid current of the creek, until, in the estuary, the backed-up creek water was almost motionless. But farther upstream the creek still continued its rapid course. A grassy spot was found along the bank, and although the turf was still wet it was not muddy. A fire-place was made of stones and the boys sent out to forage for dry wood. Thanks to their training in woodcraft the Camp Brady boys knew where to look for fuel. They quickly secured the dry inner bark from some of the water-side birches, and gathered dead twigs and branches that still hung from the parent trees and that were hardly more than dampened by the great rain. In a little while sufficient fuel had been collected and a fire started.

While some of the boys were thus gathering wood, others were skinning eels. By the time the eels were ready to cook the fire had burned down to a hot bed of coals. Mr. Henderson produced two skillets and a coffee-pot from his pack and soon the savory odor of frying eels and boiling coffee whetted the edges of appetites that were already sharp.

Meantime some logs had been found, the upper sides of which were already practically dried out by the fierce sun. These were dragged into the shade and fashioned into a great circle. And here, seated in a ring, the boys from the Liberty Camp ate their dinner of piping hot eels and sandwiches and pie and coffee.

The little picnic had been so enjoyable that everybody hated to see it end. But end it had to, and after the dishes were cleaned and the still-hot coals extinguished, the party slowly made its way back to camp.

In little groups they walked along the bank of the creek, watching with interest for marks of the flood. Mr. Henderson packed the dishes. Charley Russell came up to assist. While the two stowed things in Mr. Henderson's big basket, Charley told the farmer about Lem and Frank Anderson and the latter's present scheme.

Mr. Henderson's face grew blacker and blacker as the recital proceeded.

"The infernal scoundrel!" he said. "To try to harm as fine a lad as your friend Haskins! I'll go fire the skunk off the place at once and put an end to the business."

"If you please," said Charley, "I am sure Lem would not like that. All he has done has been for the sake of helping the country to raise food. I know he considers personal matters of less impor-

tance than the interests of the country. That is why he has put up with all that Anderson has done. If Anderson leaves the squad, a number of fellows will go with him. How many I don't know, but four at least, and I think six or eight. He has a wonderful hold on his friends. Wouldn't it be better not to drive Anderson out of the squad, but merely to take steps to prevent him from doing harm? Can the farmers here get along without six or eight of us?"

"You are right," said Mr. Henderson. "I don't know how we are going to get our crops harvested as it is. Even you twenty-four boys don't make up for the farm-hands we have lost since the war began, and we are losing more hands every day. Also we are cultivating more land than we were then. I am afraid we are going to lose part of our crops anyway. With a third of you boys gone, we'd just about be ruined. But I think I know how to settle the matter. You leave it to me."

Mr. Anderson picked up his basket and started off alone, his eye running from group to group of the retiring lads. Speedily he saw what he was looking for — Frank Anderson and his two friends, Roger and Clarence. The three were inseparable. Straight after them strode Mr. Henderson, as fast as he could go with the big basket.

"Mr. Anderson," he said, when he had nearly overtaken the trio. "I have a message for you. Will you please come here a moment?"

Frank left his comrades, who went on. He came back to Mr. Henderson, who had put his basket on the ground and was waiting for him. But instead of handing Frank a message Mr. Henderson said: "Frank, you remember that you three boys were sent out of the wheat-field the other day to rest. I wasn't so far off as you thought, when you were down under the trees. I know some of the things that were said there. I have made some inquiries about matters and I have learned of your differences with Lem Haskins. But I didn't get any information from him. In fact, he does not know that I know anything about this matter. I have nothing to say about that quarrel. It's none of my business whom you quarrel with or what you quarrel about. But when it comes to ruining my machinery, that is my business. We farmers don't want our machinery harmed and we don't intend to have it harmed. If harm comes, we shall know whom to hold responsible."

For the moment Frank was nonplussed. The bolt had come out of such a clear sky that it found him absolutely unready. His usual assurance momentarily deserted him. For once he had no reply ready. But, characteristically, he began to hate Mr. Henderson and to wish to harm him. Mr. Henderson said good-by and went briskly on. He was well enough satisfied. He had protected a lad he liked and saved his own property from harm.

CHAPTER XXI

A SILENT BATTLE

MEANTIME Lem had had time to think over his discovery of the early morning. As yet he had spoken to no one about it. He was not certain as to what he wanted to do in the matter. Never for a moment did he doubt that he had found the aerial of an enemy wireless line. No more did he question that the spies who put it up were working to destroy the great munitions plant in Central City. The one fact almost followed the other. If the line was a spy line, then it was almost certain that it was erected for the purpose of aiding in the destruction of the munitions plant. The dozens and scores of explosions and bomb outrages in other munitions plants in different parts of the country left no room for doubt in the matter.

But what was the immediate purpose of the wireless line? Surely the men hidden on the mountain, if men were hidden there, could not be there for the purpose of spying on the factory. They were too far away to do that, even with powerful glasses. And besides, if spies were needed to examine the

interior of the place, an effort would undoubtedly be made to corrupt some of the employees of the plant so that they would either give the desired information themselves or allow some one else to procure it. What, then, could these men be doing, hidden away thus on the mountain — for Lem never doubted they were so hidden? Lem could not guess, and after a time he gave up the problem entirely.

The matter for him to decide was what he should do. Then the thought came into his mind, "Why do anything at all?" Did not the munitions factory belong to the father of his worst enemy? Was he not growing richer than ever through the work that went on in his mills? Was it true, as charged, that such men as he grew richer while the common people of the country grew poorer? Lem thought of his own poverty, of the hardships he and his mother had so long endured, of the terrible struggles they had had merely to get enough food to eat, sufficient clothes to cover their bodies, and a roof over their heads, while Mr. Anderson and his family fairly wallowed in wealth. He thought of the years during which his poverty must continue before he could make his way in the world and earn the comforts he craved for his mother and himself. For Lem never doubted that he *would* earn these things. He had set his heart on success. With all his strength he was determined to win financial independence.

And he did not doubt that he would succeed. Lem had learned many things in the hard school of experience. One thing was that everything has its price and that he who is willing to pay the price can get what he wants. Lem was ready to pay the price for financial success. He was willing to toil and work and struggle and deny himself. And he knew that if he did that he must succeed. But the struggle and the sacrifice would be hard. They meant more of the same grinding poverty, years and years more of it, before he could finish his schooling and get a start in the world. And meantime Frank Anderson would live on the fat of the land, would be surfeited with luxury, would have his every wish gratified — largely because of the very work that was now going on in that factory on the other side of the mountain.

The old feeling of hatred began to gnaw at his heart. He thought of how Frank Anderson had scorned him, flouted him, ridiculed him, and finally lied about him and tried to injure him. He thought of the vicious plot he was even now engaged in that had for its purpose his own undoing. He thought of the treacherous way Anderson had chosen to hurt him, the method of injuring an innocent person in order to reach him. He pictured to himself the conscienceless glee that Frank Anderson would feel if he succeeded in fastening the blame for the broken machinery on him. Why, he asked

himself, should he lift a finger to spare the lad or the father of the lad who was persecuting him so? Why should he?

Then he thought of what might be entailed if he did try to thwart the plot he had discovered. He recalled the desperate adventure his fellows had had with the German dynamiters at the Elk City reservoir. He recounted to himself the story of their narrow escape from an awful death at the hands of the desperate men they were trying to capture. He told himself that any spy was a desperate man; that any enemy who would run the risk these men on the mountain were running would stop at nothing. They could not blow up a factory without killing people, perhaps dozens of people. They would think nothing of killing a lone boy on a secluded mountain. For Lem knew from experience that if these men were to be run down and caught, the work would have to be done secretly and by a few persons. Inevitably he would be one of those few. Why should he run this risk—the risk of his own life and the risk of leaving his mother in worse straits than ever—for the sake of people who scorned him and would gladly harm him? Why, indeed?

As he turned the matter over in his mind Lem's face became very black. All the hatred he had ever felt for Frank Anderson now found expression there. He vowed he would let the factory be blown up.

Nobody knew that he had discovered the plot. Nobody need ever know. He would let things go their own course. He would let Mr. Anderson protect his own plant. That was his business anyway. In no sense was it Lem's affair.

But the matter could not be settled so easily. Hate Frank as he might, and wish to help him as little as he did, Lem could not forget or make himself forget that there were other persons to be considered besides Frank and himself, other matters to be thought of besides their differences. What about the government? What about those boys in the Argonne forest? What about those lads in Flanders? They were risking their lives, not once or twice but constantly — and risking them for Lem himself and his mother. They were depending on some of those very shells from Frank Anderson's father's factory. If the factory blew up and the shells failed, it meant death for scores of brave boys in the trenches. And what about the men and women at work in the factory? An explosion might mean death for them, too.

With a cry as of pain — a cry in which was mingled hatred of himself for his momentary weakness and relief at coming to a decision — Lem ended the battle that was raging in his heart and brain. Let come what might, let the risk be what it would, let the consequences be anything at all, Lem resolved to do his duty. He would never rest until the plot

was uncovered and the spies laid by the heels. And unconscious of the fact that in conquering himself he had done a bigger thing than he had accomplished when he cut the log jam, Lem hastened to seek out his leader and lay the matter before him.

CHAPTER XXII

A SCOUT OF TWO

MR. GRANBY heard Lem patiently but was obviously incredulous.

"I fear you have been reading too many wild tales about German spies," he said with a smile when Lem finished his story. "This is too open a plan to have anything Teutonic about it. German spies don't work that way. Any one can go up on that old road, just as you did, and see what's going on. A man would be a fool to do his spying in that way. He'd be almost certain to be caught."

"It's the very openness of the scheme they depend upon to hide it," protested Lem. "And it isn't so open as you think, either. Nobody ever travels up and down that old skidway unless it might be a hunter. The farmers are so busy now they couldn't possibly go into the woods. If they want fire-wood, they will cut it nearer home. The hunting season won't be here for months. If we boys hadn't happened to come here to camp, I'll bet anything that line would have not been discovered all summer. I don't know what they want it for, but probably

they will have accomplished their work long before the summer is over. Then they don't care who finds it."

Mr. Granby began to look serious.

"I'm sure I'm right," persisted Lem. "It's just like the scheme at the Elk City reservoir, only there they had their aerial completely hidden. But their wire to the transmitting instrument went underground like this one."

"But there was some reason for plotters there," said Mr. Granby. "They were trying to blow up the reservoir. There's certainly nothing up in these mountains to bring spies here."

"You forget how close we are to Central City," said Lem. "I'll bet it isn't more than five miles from the summit of the mountain to the big munitions works there."

"But how could these men here harm the munitions plant? It's fenced in and guarded so close that never a soul could get near it."

"That's what they thought about the Eddystone plant, and the Du Pont plants, and a lot of other munitions factories that were blown up. They were fenced in and guarded, yet the Germans got them."

Mr. Granby meditated a moment. "Lem," he said, "there may be more in this than I thought, though it doesn't seem possible."

"There is. Surely there is," said Lem.

"Very well, then. We won't take any chances. We'll call in the state police at once."

"Oh! you mustn't do that, sir," protested Lem.

Mr. Granby looked at his companion sharply.

"And why not, pray?" he demanded a bit tartly.

"Because, sir, that would merely hinder but not prevent their mischief. That was done at Elk City and the only result was to warn the spies that we were after them. If we arrest these men on the mountain, their confederates will take warning and try some other plan. What we must do is to find out what they are trying to do and then prevent them from doing it."

"And how are we to do that, pray, unless we arrest them?"

"By wireless, sir. We can catch the messages that come to them and read them. Then we shall know what to do."

"If we *could* do it," said Mr. Granby dubiously, "that would doubtless be exactly the thing."

"Oh! We can, we can," protested Lem. "Any of the boys of the Wireless Patrol could do it. We can all read wireless messages easily. The difficulty will be to decipher them."

"What would you do?" demanded Mr. Granby.

"First of all," said Lem, his eyes beginning to sparkle, "I'd keep the matter quiet. If you put it in my hands, I wouldn't tell a soul about the situation excepting the ones we absolutely need to do the work. If the camp knew about it, you'd have twenty-four boys prowling along the mountain in

no time and the jig would be up. There must be absolute secrecy to start with."

"What would you do next?"

"I'd set a wireless watch and I'd locate their cave or hut and watch them."

"And where would you get the force necessary to do this? Your boys are the only ones in camp who know anything about wireless, and besides we need every boy we've got, and more, too, to get the crops in."

"I forgot about the crops. Suppose you let Jimmy and me do some scouting this evening. Maybe we can find out something that will help us to decide what to do."

"Very well. You and Jimmy may prowl about all you like. But be sure you don't get hurt or into trouble, and report to me as soon as you find anything of importance."

Already the day was drawing to a close. Lem hunted up his friend at once and told him what he had discovered. As Lem unfolded his plan, Jimmy's face took on an eager expression. By the time Lem had done speaking, Jimmy was so keen to start on the expedition that he could hardly restrain his impatience while the necessary preparations were made.

Although it was midsummer, the boys got their sweaters. They did not know how long they would be gone on their scout. Perhaps they would not return for hours, and former experience had shown

them how cold the midnight woods can be, even in summer. The cook made them up some bulky packages of sandwiches. Then they put their flash-lights into their pockets, and quietly bidding good-by to their leader, slipped away from camp unobserved.

Once well away from their fellows, the two scouts paused to discuss the situation.

"I think," said Jimmy, "that if we could get across the creek there, the best plan would be to follow your trail of this morning up to the notch to the aerial. Then we could trace the buried wire directly to their cave or hut."

"That would be all right," said Lem, "but night's coming pretty fast. It would be dark before we reached the aerial. If we can cut straight up the side of the mountain, instead of going way up the creek before ascending, we'll save lots of time."

"That's right," agreed Jimmy. "But where can we get across the creek?"

They made their way along the muddy margin of the stream. Almost as rapidly as it had risen, it had fallen again. Now the flood had receded until the water, though still well above its previous midsummer level, was low enough to permit them to effect a crossing. The rocks on which the original crossing had been made by Tom and Johnnie, when they found the spring, were just peeping out of water. They were wet and slippery, and a leap from one to another of them might end in a muddy bath. But

there was now no danger of anything worse. So the two boys decided to chance it.

Just as Jimmy was about to make the initial leap Lem caught sight of some long poles that the flood had lodged near them on the bank.

"Wait, Jimmy," he said, and ran and got two of the poles. With these the boys easily vaulted from rock to rock and were able to keep their footing on the slippery surfaces. Once across the creek they laid the poles in the bushes where they could find them on their return, and struck up the mountain. They made their way along the path that had been trodden when the pipes were carried up for the water line.

"Not a word, Jimmy," cautioned Lem. "And be very careful where you step. If we get separated, use our old signals."

In single file, Lem leading, the two boys noiselessly ascended the mountain. Thanks to the tread of the many feet that had preceded them along the path, the ground was compacted. There were no loose stones or pebbles to turn under their feet or go rolling noisily down the hill. So, with their sweaters tied loosely over their backs and their hands free, the two scouts cautiously and swiftly made their way. The steepness of the grade soon set them to puffing, and it became necessary to halt now and then to recover their breath. Yet in an amazingly short time they were nearing the great spring. Nor

was it any too soon. Under the foliage it was already dusk. They had approached to within two hundred feet of the spring, perhaps, when Lem turned to whisper to Jimmy. But his message was never delivered. For sharp and loud through the twilight stillness came a distinct clink, as of metal striking metal. Without a word Lem grasped Jimmy by the shoulder and pulled him to the ground. And there, prone on the rocky slope, the two boys lay staring into the dusk and listening with bated breath.

Several times the metallic clink was repeated. Then faintly was heard a swashing sound as though water were being stirred. Lem slid down to his companion, and putting his lips beside the latter's ear, whispered, "That clinking noise is the same sound we heard at camp one night. It is the pipe line and it wasn't rolling stones that made the sound at all. I think some one is dipping water from the spring, and that he either strikes the pipe with his bucket or kicks it with an iron-shod heel. That must have been what made the noise before."

Jimmy nodded agreement. Then the two lay quiet, listening again. The stillness was intense. It was at that hour of the day when nature seems to go to sleep. The breezes that during the daylight hours agitated the tree tops above them, had now sunk to rest. No longer did the roar of the flood ascend from the valley. The little furred and feathered inhabitants of the woods all had sought their

nests. In the silence the boys could almost hear their own hearts beat. Through the stillness every slightest sound came clear and distinct.

Presently the two boys heard the scratching of a match on a stone. A little later there came to them the scent of burning tobacco. Then plainly was heard the tread of feet, shuffling uncertainly in the deceiving light.

"Quick!" whispered Lem. "He's taking water to the gang. We must follow him. But don't make a sound."

Silently the two scouts went on to the spring, approaching it with every precaution lest a second water carrier might be there. In the gloom they could hardly see where they were stepping. No human figures were visible about the spring basin, but the boys scouted swiftly around it to make certain no one was near. Then as swiftly as the fading light would permit, they followed after the man with the water buckets.

Under other circumstances this might have been a difficult task. But the man ahead of them, laden with his buckets of water, made more noise than he otherwise would have made, and it would not have been difficult to trail him through sound alone even though he was lost to sight.

At first he struck directly upward along the wooded part of the slope. The boys flitted behind him, having almost to feel their way. They were so

well hidden by intervening trees and the darkness that there was no possibility of their being seen. Only by making a noise would they betray themselves. So they were able to keep comparatively near to the stranger.

After a time he turned abruptly to the right and proceeded along the slope instead of up it. In a few rods he came to the edge of the timber and began to cross the great area of loose rocks. Here, with no leafy covering to shut out the light, he became visible. For a long time he remained visible. As the boys stood on the very edge of the sheltering forest, straining their eyes to see him better, the man seemed hardly to move at all. At first the boys were puzzled by his slowness. Then they understood. He was making his way with the utmost caution, a foot at a time, lest he topple a stone from its place and start an avalanche that would grind him to pieces.

Hidden within the gloom of the forest, Jimmy and Lem patiently waited in silence for the man to get far enough away from them so that they could take up the trail. They dared no longer hang close to him. Even though it was all but dark, a figure could still be seen, in the open, at a considerable distance. On the other hand, it was necessary to run some risk of detection. If they waited until the stranger had completely vanished from sight, they might not be able to trail him. His shoes left no telltale prints on the bare stones, and even if they had, the boys would

not have dared to use their flash-lights to follow the footprints. So they were in a quandary.

But before they could decide what to do, the matter was settled for them. Voices were heard in the direction taken by the stranger. Peering sharply through the gloom, the two scouts now made out the figures of the two men. Evidently the carrier of water had been joined by a companion.

"If they were only in the woods," whispered Jimmy, "we could creep up close enough to hear what they are saying. But we won't dare venture to try it out there."

All the lads could do was to keep quiet and await developments. Presently the voices in the darkness ceased, and in a few moments the two boys made out the form of a man coming toward them.

"Quick!" said Lem. "We must hide where we can watch him."

Swiftly they drew back into the dark woods. Not many rods behind them several good-sized boulders lay close together, and close about them rose a number of large trees. Quickly they made their way between the boulders and crouched. The great stones fairly ringed them in, and the big trees formed a sort of outer defense. Unless he looked directly into their hiding-place, the advancing stranger would never discover them. With every nerve stretched taut, with their hearts pounding furiously, the two boys in the dark waited breathlessly for the approach of the spy.

Slowly the man crossed the stone pile. They heard him swear softly to himself. As he entered the timber, he gave an exclamation of relief. He advanced a few rods through the trees, stumbling over roots and stones and cursing to himself. Then suddenly a brilliant ray of light illumined his pathway. Assured that the heavy timber would effectually conceal its beam from distant eyes, the man had lighted a powerful electric torch. Guided by this, he struck off rapidly and confidently through the forest.

"Follow him, Jimmy," whispered Lem, "and see what he does. I'll trail the other fellow. Go straight to camp when you've found out what he's doing."

Jimmy glided away in pursuit of the ray of light, that danced ahead of him like a will-o'-the-wisp. His task was easy. He was to follow something he could see, and the light itself helped him to make his way. Jimmy knew that the closer he could follow the man the easier it would be for him and the less likely he was to collide with anything or make any other noise that would betray him. So he slipped closer and closer to the retreating beam of light, until he was not more than a few rods behind it. Perilous though this course seemed, it was in reality the safest possible plan, as Jimmy knew. He realized that he could not be seen unless the man played his search-light directly on him; and Jimmy trusted to his natural quickness to get out of sight should the

light swing round, before it rested on him. Thus the two, the hunter and the hunted, went through the nocturnal woods as silently as the shadows that enveloped them.

At first Jimmy thought the man in front of him was walking at random; but soon he discovered that he was going straight as a die, as though following a given line. Yet Jimmy could see no signs, no blazes on the trees, no trodden path, no evident indications to guide the man. Once the fellow stopped. Quick as a flash Jimmy slipped behind a great tree and stood motionless, hardly daring to breathe. But the man did not turn his light behind him. Instead he flashed it on the ground directly at his feet. Then, bent over so he could almost touch the earth, he walked slowly along for some rods, carefully scrutinizing the earth.

Jimmy crept as close as he dared, hoping to be able to see what the man was searching for. He was treading on exactly the same ground the spy had trodden a few seconds ahead of him. But in the blackness about him Jimmy could not even see the ground, much less make out what was on it. Suddenly he realized that the earth he was walking on was soft and had been soft all the way. He recalled that he had not kicked a single stone or stubbed his toe against a root. Then in the moving light ahead of him Jimmy saw a streak of yellow clay, like a daub of paint, several feet long. In a flash Jimmy

comprehended the situation. The man was examining the line of the transmission wire, to see if it had been disturbed; and Jimmy, following straight behind the man, was walking on the soft bed that had been made when the spies filled in their little trench after burying their wire.

Immediately under his feet, then, was the thread of wire that kept these spies, holed up somewhere on the mountain, in touch with their confederates. For a moment Jimmy was tempted to cut the wire. He even knelt down and plunged his fingers into the soft loam. Then better judgment brought him to his feet again. To interrupt communications might hinder but would not prevent the spies from accomplishing their work. On the other hand it would surely warn them that they were discovered. The best thing to do was to follow Lem's suggestion and let them proceed without interruption. So Jimmy went reluctantly on his way, quickening his pace to regain the ground he had lost through his momentary hesitation.

On went the spy, following straight and true the line of the hidden wire. And close behind him, furtive as a shadow, came Jimmy. On they went through the dark and somber forest until suddenly the light from the spy's torch fell on an unpeeled telephone pole. Jimmy knew he had reached the aerial. Carefully the spy played his light on the pole, the cross-arm, and the little threads of wire

twisted together just beneath it. Then he strode over to the companion pole and examined the wire connections there. Everything was intact. With a sigh that Jimmy could plainly hear, the man turned from the aerial. His quest was completed. Cautiously Jimmy concealed himself behind a great boulder, peering over the top of it at the spy, who now stood in the open skidway. Presently the man lighted a cigar. Jimmy smiled with pleasure at that, as it indicated to him the man's certainty that he was safe from discovery. After a time the spy turned about and retraced his steps. Again Jimmy followed on his trail, but this time he followed well to the rear. He did not want to risk alarming the man.

Meantime Lem, too, had been busy. When Jimmy and his quarry were well out of sight, Lem crept from his place of concealment and made his way to the edge of the great stone heap. The man he was after had long ago vanished from sight, which made Lem's task additionally difficult. But he knew the direction the man had followed so long as he had been visible; so Lem started after him.

Painfully slow was his progress. He had not gone fifty feet before a stone rolled under his foot. But it came to rest almost before it was fairly started, and Lem breathed freely. A stone rattling down the slope would have meant to Lem about what a ringing burglar alarm does to a nocturnal thief. With every foot

he advanced Lem understood better how truly Tom Sheppard had judged the nature of the stone pile. It seemed as though every rock in it was rounded off by the elements. And these rounded stones on the shoulder of the mountain made Lem think of a quantity of oranges heaped on a sloping plank. It was necessary to displace only one of them to send the entire pile clattering down the hill. The idea made cold chills run up and down his spine, for countless numbers of these rocks would weigh a hundred pounds or more. To be caught in a slide of them would be to be pounded to a pulp.

As Lem worked his way farther out into the open, he found he could see much more distinctly. He strained his eyes to see if the spies had any sort of path. He could not believe that they crossed this dangerous stone heap daily without having taken some steps to make it safer. If only he could have used his light, Lem might have been able to tell from the appearance of the stones themselves where the spies had crossed. The mosses and lichens on them would surely have been worn by the passage of so many feet. But Lem dared not use his light. Almost certainly he would betray himself if he did. So he went on, slowly, testing each stone before he put his weight on it, sometimes feeling ahead of him with his fingers, and resorting to every expedient he could think of to press ahead swiftly and silently.

Once his heart almost stopped beating as he heard,

far up the slope, the rattle and clatter of a great stone that had somehow become loosened and begun to roll. Another joined it. Then another began to roll. Their clatter raised a tumult that was magnified by echoes flung back by the fringe of forest crowning the ridge. As the uproar grew Lem could feel his hair rising. Had the avalanche he feared already started? With clenched fists he stood still, listening, trying to decide whether or not the rolling rocks were headed for him. Then, as suddenly as the noise began, it subsided. Something had stopped the rolling stones.

Lem drew a long breath and went on. For several minutes he crept forward in silence. Already he had forgotten the rolling stones. Now his mind was intent upon finding the trail of the man who had vanished into the darkness ahead of him. Then suddenly, from almost under his feet, came a loud whirring sound. As though turned to stone Lem stopped dead in his tracks. Little shivers ran over his body. His skin prickled all over like the skin of one suddenly chilled. But his heart was racing wildly. The whirring sound was the note of a rattler!

Well Lem knew that note. Many a time he had heard it in these very mountains. And he knew what the consequences of one misstep might be — a sudden stinging blow in the dark, then a quick swelling of the body and perhaps death in awful agony.

Assuredly a snake-bite meant death under the circumstances. Who was there near to assist him? Only the spies he was hunting. They would rejoice to be free of him without having themselves to run the risk of murder. Death, alone in this dark and awful place — that was what menaced Lem.

Shaking, he stood in his tracks, afraid to advance, afraid to go back, afraid to make any sort of movement. A very panic of fear gripped him. If only he could have seen the terrible thing that menaced him, his course would have been easy. But he knew not where to look, where to set his foot.

Like any man who tries to do right, Lem had come to a crisis. The path of duty was the path of danger. And like others in similar circumstances, Lem was tempted to retreat. Why, he asked himself again, should he risk his life for those who were trying to harm him? Why should he incur danger for Frank Anderson's father? Again he fought the battle between inclination and duty, just as he had after the discovery of the spies. It was not too late yet, he told himself, to drop the matter. Jimmy would do anything he urged him to do. If he asked him to forget what he had discovered, he felt sure Jimmy would do it; for he knew Jimmy felt toward Frank Anderson exactly as he did himself. Would this not be the sensible, the easy way, out of the present situation?

Long he waged the battle with himself, standing

like one of the very stones at his feet. How long he fought with himself Lem never knew, or how long the battle might have raged. For suddenly something caused him to turn. Far off, deep in the forest he had so lately quitted and unquestionably coming toward him, Lem saw a flash of light. The spy that Jimmy had trailed was coming back. Whatever he did, Lem must do it at once. There was yet time to slip back to the forest and hide before the spy with the light came too close. There might still be time to go on and find what he was after. Which should he do — go back to safety and give up the chase, or do his duty and run the risk? For a single second Lem thought of Frank Anderson again. Then he had a mental vision of a great plain, scarred with trenches and red with poppies, on which he saw men dead, dying, horribly mutilated — men risking and giving all they had, even life itself — for him, for him. Fear and indecision vanished from his mind. He belonged to the second line of defense. The test had come. He would go on.

Go on he did. Jerking his sweater from his shoulders, he waved it fiercely before him. No answering rattle came to his ears, and Lem knew that the stealthy death that had awaited him waited no longer. Swiftly, recklessly, he sped over the rocks. Yet with all his speed he stepped carefully. Fortune seemed to be with him. No stone either slipped or rolled. Had Lem but known it, he had blundered

into the path made by the enemy when they ran their wire through the stone heap. Then they had lifted and replaced stone after stone, making sure each was solid. The spy Lem had been following had gone slowly, not through fear of rolling stones, but because of the rattlers.

Occasionally Lem turned to look at the light behind him. At each glance he saw it was growing more distinct. The man at his back was gaining on him. Desperately Lem forged ahead. He knew not where he was going, or what he was looking for. But he could not stop, even to listen. At one of his glances backward he saw that the spy was close to the edge of the forest. The next time Lem looked no light was visible, and Lem knew that the man at his back was also out in the open, picking his way across the stones.

A sigh of relief escaped from Lem. He had feared that the stranger's light might betray him. Now that danger was gone. The two were on equal terms. Now it was up to Lem to find the other spy and get away before the man at his heels overtook him. But search as he might, look where he would, Lem could distinguish nothing that suggested human presence. Neither light nor the smell of smoke came to him as a guide.

Suddenly he stopped short. A new fear had come to him. Had he over-run the hiding place? Had he, in his haste, passed unseen the very thing he was searching for? The fear of it sickened him.

But a second thought reassured him. The man at his back, far from being a danger, was a help. The man would show him the very thing he wanted to find.

Quickly Lem turned aside, seeking a place where he could hide and yet see. Not far down the slope some boulders stuck up above the level of the rock pile. Even in the gloom they were distinguishable. Like a shadow Lem glided down the slope and concealed himself. And so, peering out from behind the boulders, he waited and watched until the spy had passed. Then he crept softly up the hill again until he was fairly behind the spy, and so, crouching low to escape observation should the man turn, he glided after him. But he had not far to follow. Before the man had gone a hundred yards he thrice gave a soft whistle. Suddenly a line of light appeared. Directly ahead of him Lem made out dimly a huge ledge of rocks. Evidently there was a cave in it, for the light came from within the rock. A figure could be seen dimly at the entrance to the cave, holding back with one arm some sort of a curtain, probably a blanket, that had covered the entrance. For a moment he stood thus, awaiting his comrade. In that brief space Lem saw two other men within the cave, which was apparently small, a number of boxes and large tin cans, and a radio telegraph instrument. Lem had found what he was after. He had learned all it was necessary to know.

Turning, he sped rapidly back across the rock pile toward the forest.

Once within the shelter of the trees, Lem gave the plaintive, tremulous, flute-like note of the screech-owl. Twice he repeated the signal. But no answering note came to his ear. Evidently Jimmy had followed his instructions to the letter and gone straight back to camp. Drawing his flash-light, and holding it down so as to illumine only the path immediately before him, Lem descended to the spring, and thence made his way down the well trodden path along which the two had earlier ascended. In the bushes he found only one of the two poles they had left, so he knew Jimmy had crossed the creek ahead of him. In a few moments he, too, was on the far shore of the stream, and a few minutes later still he arrived at camp. A light still burned in Mr. Granby's tent. Guardedly Lem announced his arrival.

"Come in," said Mr. Granby in a low tone.

Lem entered and closed the flap behind him. Jimmy and Mr. Granby were seated on camp-stools. Lem joined them and long into the night the little council of war discussed the situation as it appeared in the light of what had been discovered by the little scouting band of two.

CHAPTER XXIII

A COUNCIL OF WAR

THE remainder of the camp was sunk in slumber. The dim candle in Mr. Granby's tent was the only spark of light that glowed through the darkness. The little row of tents, looming spectral and white in the gloomy little valley, would have reminded an observer, had there been one, of those wilderness camps in the northern woods in colonial days, when men marched for weeks through the wilderness for a chance to fight — and died horrible deaths in the forest. But there were no observers, no human observers, of the encampment of this peaceful modern army. Only an occasional owl looked up or a flitting nighthawk glimpsed the rows of little tents. Only a prowling nocturnal mouse or a fluttering moth was cognizant of the little company of soldiers of the soil that lay asleep in the misty darkness beside the hurrying creek.

With their heads close together, the trio in Mr. Granby's tent discussed in low tones the situation as it now appeared to them.

"We know where their aerial is, where they are

concealed, and that there are four of them," said Lem, after he and Jimmy had recounted their experiences of the night. "Now it remains to intercept their messages and discover what their plans are. But there's the difficulty. The government has forbidden amateurs to use wireless outfits."

"I don't see that there could be any objection to our using a radio outfit if we only listened in with it," protested Jimmy. "The object of the law is to prevent the transmission of spy messages."

"What you say, Jimmy," said Mr. Granby, "sounds entirely reasonable. Yet there is one flaw in your argument. The purpose of having a law is that the law may be obeyed. We come within the law. If we violate the law, we can have no rightful objection if others do so also. So we ourselves help to break down restrictions that were created because they were necessary. We cannot afford to do anything in violation of the new radio laws. But I haven't a bit of doubt that, under the circumstances, we may be able to get permission from the authorities to do what seems necessary. The question is how to get such permission quickest."

"If only Captain Hardy were here," sighed Lem, "he would be able to arrange the thing at once. He's a friend of the head of the government radio service and he's conducting a wireless spy hunt in New York now for the government, with four of our boys."

"Then he's the very man to get into touch with," said Mr. Granby. "What is the best way to do it?"

"The quickest way," suggested Lem, "would be to get him on the long distance telephone. A letter takes so long."

"There is one objection to both the telephone and the telegraph," said Mr. Granby. "Your message can be read by every person who handles it — unless you send a code message — and, of course, you Wireless Patrol boys don't have a code."

"No, we don't," admitted Lem, ruefully.

"But," said Jimmy, "we ought to be able to tell Captain Hardy what's what without saying it in so many words. Can't we do it?"

"The very idea, Jimmy. Of course we can," replied Lem.

"That ought to be entirely possible," said their leader thoughtfully, "since Captain Hardy knows all about your former experiences with spies. How could we word such a message?"

For a long time the three pondered over the matter, discussing various messages that would convey their meaning without telling the casual listener too much. But in the end they gave up the idea.

"It looks this way to me," said Mr. Granby. "You know I didn't take much stock in the spy theory when you first told me what you had found, Lem. But now that I have thought it all over and have heard your story of what happened to the Wireless

Patrol in camp at Fort Brady, I haven't a bit of doubt that the men on the mountain are German spies and that they are plotting to blow up the Anderson shell plant. What is more, I am now thoroughly convinced that you boys are right in believing the matter should be kept secret and the men watched until their plans are learned. It appears to me that if men are so desperate and so clever as to do what these men are doing, they will not neglect every precaution to insure their own safety and the success of their plan.

"We know that the Germans have corrupted employees of factories and munitions works elsewhere. Why couldn't they do the same here — perhaps with the telephone employees? What is to prevent one or more of their confederates from having telephones of their own installed so that they can listen in on party wires? I don't say that they have done this, and I really do not think they would go so far. But it's a possibility. And if there's any telephone line they would tap, it would be the party line to which Mr. Henderson's telephone is attached. They know our boys have seen them. If they are going to spy on anybody's telephone talk, it would be on ours. And the same objection exists to the use of the telegraph. It looks to me as though the only safe plan is to communicate with Captain Hardy by letter. And we'll send a registered, special delivery letter at that!"

So the matter was settled, and the three spent some further time deciding what was to go in the letter. Mr. Granby wrote the letter, a paragraph at a time, as they decided what to say. When he had finished writing, he read his epistle aloud to his fellows. This was what he had set down:

“My dear Captain Hardy:

“I am in charge of a Liberty Camp of twenty-four boy farmers, who attended the training camp at State College and were sent to do work in the district near Central City. Naturally the Central City contingent, for whose enlistment I understand you are largely responsible, has been sent to do duty at this camp. We are encamped along the creek, just within the foothills, on the land of Mr. Joseph Henderson. The mountain lies between our camp and Central City. You are doubtless familiar with the region.

“While prospecting for a spring to supply the camp with drinking water, Johnnie Lee and Tom Sheppard discovered a number of men erecting what they said was a telephone line for Uncle Sam. It ran up an old skidway on our side of the mountain. We thought nothing of the matter until your lieutenant, Lem Haskins, went prowling up the skidway one wet day. The skidway now extends from the summit of the mountain part way to the base, the lower part doubtless having been filled with earth washed down from above, so that thick vegetation

has grown up and conceals the lower end of the skidway. Some poles with their bark still on and unpeeled cross-arms had been erected along this skidway. Being unbarked, they could not be distinguished, at a distance of a few rods, from trees. Four strands of wire had been run from about the middle of the slope to the summit. Unused coils of wire were left lying along the skidway, and more poles also lay there, evidently to give the idea that the line was interrupted in the erection.

"Lem thought nothing of this until he noticed that the four wires stretching between the poles at the very summit of the mountain were insulated from the rest of the line and were united by fine wires, thus forming a perfect aerial. He also found a hidden wire that ran down one pole, under the bark which had been raised and replaced. This wire led off underground. It had been very skillfully concealed. A scouting expedition by Lem and Jimmy Donnelly this evening resulted in the discovery of a cave in a ledge of rocks far up on the mountain-side, in which four men were hidden. A wireless outfit was plainly seen in the cave. There can be no doubt that the hidden wire runs from the aerial to this cave.

"The two boys have just come in with this information. It is late at night and we are holding a council of war while the remainder of the camp sleeps. We feel certain that the men are German

spies, and that they are concerned in a plot to blow up the shell plant at Central City. The boys insist that we must keep the matter secret and watch the spies, if we want to thwart them. I have come to agree with them. To do this, we must have permission to use a wireless outfit to listen in. But we do not know how to get permission to do this. We are also puzzled to know how to handle the matter in case we get permission. The spies know we know about their 'telephone-line.' They may guess that we suspect them, though we have done nothing to alarm them. They may be watching us. Hence we must also use a secret wireless. And since secrecy is so necessary, we have decided to tell no one in camp about the matter excepting only those necessary to help in the work. At present only Jimmy and Lem and I are in the secret. Please do what you can to get permission for us to use a wireless and advise us as to what, in your opinion, is the best method of procedure.

"Above all, please make haste. The boys are fearful that the damage may be done before we can learn what is afoot. We would have wired you or talked with you over the telephone, but the mail seemed the safest way.

"You will be pleased to know that my twenty-four boys are doing fine work, and that their efforts are in no small degree due to the enthusiastic loyalty of your own Wireless Patrol boys. I hope that I

shall some day have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. When I do, I have some things to tell you concerning the deportment of your boys that will please you very much. They've got the finest spirit of any boys in the company, and I am sure that I know how and where they got it. When you hear what I have to tell you, you will be proud of the job you have done with these lads.

"With sincere wishes for the success of your present labors, and thanks for whatever you may do to assist us, I am, believe me,

"Most cordially yours,

"HOWARD GRANBY."

"I'm going into town in the morning," said Mr. Granby, as he folded and sealed the letter, "and I'll put this in the post-office myself. I'll get it off on the first mail. Now you boys turn in and try to get a little sleep. We've got a hard day ahead of us, and it's almost daybreak now."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE PINCH

MR. GRANBY'S statement was true enough. The day's work had proved hard. The sun came up with a fiery glow that foretold the hottest kind of weather. The warmth and the wind soon dried out the grain; and though the earth was still far from dry, work was resumed on the wheat harvest. Mr. Henderson's wheat-field contained thirty acres. Probably not more than ten acres had been cut on the first day of harvest. At least two days more would be required to finish the task, and more still if the horses became fagged. If the work could have been begun in the cool of the morning it would have gone faster and better. But until the sun had dried the dew on the straw, harvesting could not begin. And so, although the boys at the Liberty Camp were up at an early hour, they did not come marching down the notch until the sun was high and the day well advanced. Even then they had to wait a few minutes until Mr. Henderson was thoroughly satisfied with the condition of the wheat.

One and all, the young farmers sought the shade

while waiting. As the sun climbed higher and its rays poured down hotter and hotter, the breeze of the early morning constantly grew fainter, at last dying away almost entirely. By the time the boys were ordered to the field there was hardly a breath of air stirring. And because the wet ground was exhaling so much moisture, the atmosphere was humid to an almost unbearable degree. In fact, it was so saturated with moisture that apparently it would absorb no more. There was no drying of perspiration, no evaporation of sweat, to cool the heated farm lads. Before the work had been in progress half an hour, not a boy in the group had a dry thread on his body. Every one in the party was soaked and bathed in perspiration.

As on the previous day Mr. Henderson drove one binder and Charley the other, though it was arranged that each driver should be relieved after a time by others. The boys afoot looked enviously at Charley as he went round and round the field on his high seat. They had to walk over the soft, yielding earth. The very effort necessary to move was tiring. Every time a boy set up a shock, he had to bend and lift two heavy sheaves, one in either hand, and repeat the process until the shock was completed. The sun beat straight down on the bent backs so ardently that its fiery beams seemed to pierce through shirts and underclothing. It seemed fairly to scorch and blister. Its indirect rays crept

under broad-brimmed straw hats and tanned and burned the faces beneath. Wrists and forearms, where shirt-sleeves were incautiously rolled up for the sake of coolness, soon became red and painful.

But when one of the lads afoot relieved Charley, and started off on the hard, high, iron seat, he found that Charley's task was quite as difficult as his own had been. The very seat seemed like a griddle. The air, that rose quivering with heat, was like hot steam. The roughness of the ground jarred and jolted the binder until the driver's teeth fairly rattled, for there were no springs to the binder seat. Again and again it was necessary for the driver to brace himself to avoid being shaken from his place. His body muscles were under constant tension. And all the while the driver had to watch his swath, to make sure he cut it true and as wide as possible without missing any straw. Constantly the horses tried to turn inward, snatching mouthfuls whenever they could get their heads within reach of the golden grain. So the driver had to watch his team every second he was in motion. He had to drop his sheaves in little rows so the shocks could be fashioned faster and easier. And at every corner he had to finish his swath clean, then back the heavy machine half-way around and start his next cut at right angles to the swath just finished.

It was hard and heavy work. It was trying labor. Every muscle and every nerve was in constant use.

For, in addition to running his binder true and driving his horses straight and dropping his sheaves exactly, the driver had always to keep one eye on his twine, to make certain that it was not exhausted, to see that it was feeding right, to be sure that the sheaves were tied. And like a locomotive driver, he had to listen, listen, listen to the whir of his machine as he drove along in order to detect any false or unusual noise. Assuredly driving a binder was not the fun some of Charley's companions had imagined it to be.

And assuredly real harvesting was not like the lessons at the training camp. Then the boys worked in three-hour periods, often with one boy to be taught a trick while the others rested. Now every lad was busy every minute, and the task was an all-day job. Round and round went the binders in endless procession. Round and round went the shock makers, plodding wearily over the soft stubble land, bending and lifting, bending and lifting, bending and lifting, until it seemed to many a lad in the crew that his back would break in half.

It was such an exhausting day that Mr. Henderson kept close watch on his horses to see that they were not overworked, and Mr. Granby's eye roamed from boy to boy to see that none became overheated. More and more often as the hours wore on, it became necessary to rest the horses. And at intervals ever lessening the lads from Liberty Camp were com-

pelled to seek the shade for a few moments. A jug of water helped to allay the parching thirst occasioned by the unusual labors, but the bodies and muscles of these young boys were not hardened and inured to labor like those of men and they rapidly became fagged.

And now came the pinch, the time of trial, like that faced by new troops going over the top for the first time. The weeks of training at State College had taught these lads how to do their work, just as the months of drill at camp or cantonment had prepared the men in the trenches for theirs. The test in both cases came when the forces went into action. Did the soldier about to go over the top have the necessary stamina and courage to fight? Did these lads in the second line of defense have enough strength of mind and spirit to stick to their tasks?

Results alone could tell. And results were not long in showing. To Mr. Granby these results were more illuminating than all the things he had been told concerning the boys he was to lead. As he ran his eye from lad to lad, he noted that Lem was working away with rhythmical movements, his lips compressed in a straight line, his features a little drawn and twisted into a kind of scowl. But it was not the scowl of ill will. It was the hard, set face of a man who is doing an unpleasant duty and who is determined to let nothing stand in the way of

its accomplishment. And Mr. Granby also noted that no one paused less often or rested for shorter periods than Lem. Once, in fact, noting the line of weariness on Lem's face, and seeing how hot the lad was becoming, Mr. Granby cautioned him not to overdo.

Jimmy Donnelly was a good running mate for Lem so far as spirit was concerned. Always seeing the funny side of things, Jimmy was now more inclined to laugh than scowl at the job in hand. But his jaw was set in that uncompromising way he had and the twinkle in his eyes was as much the light of courage as it was of fun.

Tom Sheppard, big, stalwart Tom Sheppard, was a joy to behold. Tom was of the country. He had been born on a farm. His great muscles had that strength that comes from long practice at sustained labor; for, like all farm lads, he had had to do heavy work even as a little child. And now, though he had for several years lived in a small city, he did with facility the old accustomed tasks.

Most of the other boys were working with dogged determination. But there were one or two very evident exceptions. Frank Anderson, big enough and husky enough to have toiled with the best of his fellows, was the worst drone in the group. Had Frank wanted to harvest wheat, neither sun nor anything else would have prevented him. He had tremendous will power if he chose to exert it. But

Frank did not want to harvest wheat any more than he had wanted to do any of the other tasks he had been doing since he enlisted in the Working Reserve. So now, as in the past, he merely "went through the motions." He set up shocks enough to keep up appearances, but sought the shade at every possible opportunity.

His face, too, wore a scowl. But his scowl was the exact opposite of Lem's. His scowl *was* the scowl of ill will. Continually as he set up shocks or brooded in the shade, he was turning over and over in his mind the unpleasant situation in which he found himself, and pondering on how he could use it to his purpose—and that purpose was to "get even" with Lem Haskins. So much had Frank brooded over the matter that by this time "getting even" with Lem had become an absorbing passion with him. For now, in addition to being compelled to do what he did not want to do, Frank knew for the first time in his life what it was to be regarded with contempt. Company B had never forgotten the outcome of Lem's trial, although most of Frank's casual acquaintances in the group at the Liberty Camp now treated him more cordially than they had immediately after the court-martial. Only Frank's immediate chums displayed the old-time liking for him. And they, of course, imitated him in everything. So Frank's mere example made two other drones in addition to himself.

As the day wore on, the sun grew hotter and hotter, the sheaves seemed heavier and heavier, and tired arms and legs moved slower and slower. Plainly the lads from the Liberty Camp were becoming fagged. Nor were they the only beings that were played out. The horses, too, were fast reaching the limits of their endurance. Long before the day was done, therefore, Mr. Henderson gave the signal to quit work. The binder canvases were covered to keep off the dew of the coming night, the horses were unhitched and led to the barn, and the Liberty boys went wearily back to camp.

Excepting for the fact that it was not quite so hot, the next day was a repetition of the day just passed. For hours the tired boys and horses toiled under a blistering sun, earning, in very truth, the right to their title "soldiers of the soil." On this day, too, it was necessary to stop work early on account of the horses. So a third day's work was necessary before the harvest was completed.

Three hot, stifling days they had been; days to try the spirit of any group of lads. Thanks to the short hours, the boys had come through the pinch without harm and were rapidly hardening to the work. With Mr. Granby to cheer and encourage them, and with the determined example of Lem and Jimmy and Tom before them, the lads had come through the test with flying colors. Discontent was confined to Frank Anderson's little group.

Had it not been that now, more than ever, desertion would have given him the reputation of being yellow, Frank would have left the camp at once. He had added Mr. Henderson to his list of enemies, and with every hour he brooded over his situation, he disliked the farmer more. To be doing work that he despised with all his heart, to be doing it against his will, and to be doing it for a man he hated, constituted for Frank a situation that was well-nigh unbearable. Yet circumstances had thrust him into just such a situation and he could see no way out of it — that is, no way that would save his reputation. To quit work and take his chums with him would hurt Mr. Henderson. Frank wanted to do it. But if he did, he must expect to be called a quitter; and that Frank could not stand. Over and over he asked himself how he could injure Lem Haskins and Mr. Henderson without suffering in return. But he saw no way.

CHAPTER XXV

A DANGEROUS SITUATION

SOONER than ever he had expected, and in a way utterly unlooked for, Frank's opportunity came. On the evening that the Henderson wheat cutting was finished, Mr. Granby received a telegram from Captain Hardy asking him to come to New York immediately. Mr. Granby understood of course that he was needed in connection with the discovery of the spies on the mountain. He found that by catching a train that night he might be in New York in the morning. So he prepared to depart at once. How long he would be gone he had no way of knowing, but he did not believe his absence would be extended. Nevertheless it was necessary that some one should take charge of the work while he was away. Even when things went most smoothly there were a hundred little questions every day that had to be decided by the leader. To leave the camp without a responsible head, therefore, would be to invite discord.

Lem was of course the logical one to put in charge of the work. He had been an officer at the training

camp, and there he had attained such an influence with his fellows that some of them still referred minor matters to him rather than bother Mr. Granby with them. Furthermore, excepting for Jimmy, no one but Lem knew about the spies on the mountain. Had Mr. Granby been able to see inside the heads of the lads under his command and read their thoughts, he might not have made Lem his vice commander. But he could not read thought, he did not know what was in Frank Anderson's head, and so he left Lem in charge of the camp.

In doing so, Mr. Granby played directly into the hands of Frank Anderson. Orders that, coming from Mr. Granby, would have been accepted without question by every lad in the company, might easily be questioned when issued by Lem, particularly by those of his fellows who did not like him. Motives that could not possibly animate Mr. Granby might readily be attributed by Frank to Lem and as readily credited by certain lads. Furthermore, where Mr. Granby had full power to inflict final and instant punishment for breaches of discipline, Lem had no power at all. He could merely reprimand an offender and report him to Mr. Granby for final judgment. By offering a plausible excuse, the offender might well hope to come off with little harm, or even escape entirely the just results of his deeds. At least so it seemed to Frank Anderson as he pondered the situation. And having so decided,

he lost no time in considering how he could turn the situation to account.

Just as Mr. Granby had unconsciously played into Frank's hands, so now Lem did likewise. The Henderson wheat cutting was done; but the wheat had yet to be hauled to the barn and stored in the mows. Mr. Henderson needed at least five boys to help him, for he intended to run two wagons. Mr. Rawlins urgently asked for as many boys as could be spared, to hoe his corn. Lem had to select the boys for each task. Johnnie Lee was still happily and efficiently helping the trucker with his gardening. Alec Cunningham and George Larkin were helping a near-by farmer to make hay. Lem could choose from among the remaining boys. He had once helped a farmer to store his wheat. With painful distinctness Lem remembered the terrible heat and the stifling air in the barn, and the exhausting strain of pitching the heavy sheaves up into the mow. Only the sturdiest of boys could endure such a test.

When Lem made his selection, therefore, he picked Tom Sheppard first of all and then Jimmy. Next he selected George Martin and finally Charley Russell. These four, with Lem himself, would give Mr. Henderson the force he needed. It would have been more fitting, as Lem well knew, had he chosen Frank Anderson rather than Charley Russell. Frank was the sturdier of the two. But Lem, know-

ing how hard the work would be, feared lest Frank might think he was taking advantage of his temporary authority to "rub it in" by assigning him to the hardest tasks possible. So Lem sent Frank to hoe corn, with all the other boys in camp except those named.

If only Tom Sheppard or one of the Camp Brady boys could have been with the hoers of corn things would have been different. Then there would have been some one friendly to Lem to defend him. But not one of Lem's immediate friends was in the group. On the other hand Frank Anderson and his two chums, Roger and Clarence, as well as George Fletcher and former Corporal Worthington, were all with the corn cultivators. To stir up dissatisfaction was now Frank's immediate purpose; and if he had made the conditions himself they could not have been more to his liking.

His active brain saw the possibilities of the situation the minute Lem announced the personnel of the two parties. From that instant Frank began to exert himself. Into his manner he threw all the charm and magnetism that he knew how to exert. He was alert. He made bright remarks. Like an Indian orator seeking to win the good-will of an audience, Frank spoke now to this fellow worker, now to that, in an unobtrusively flattering way. He made opportunity to speak of this or that creditable thing he had seen one or another of his comrades

do at State College or at the Liberty Camp. And when the party reached the corn ground and the actual labor of the day began, no one seemed more eager for it than Frank. It was remarkable how far the short journey from the camp to the corn field went in restoring Frank to the good-will of those of his fellows who had been estranged from him. Meantime, with characteristic craftiness, Frank had passed the word to his two immediate chums that this was the opportunity to stir up trouble for Lem, and that the way to do it was to create dissatisfaction among their fellows. But he cautioned them that suggestions unfavorable to Lem must not come from them but be drawn from others.

To bring this about was not so difficult as it might seem. The sun was hot, and the hoeing was hard work. Enthusiasm for the task soon waned. By the middle of the forenoon every lad in the group was sick of the job. The time was ripe for the plotters to begin their task.

"Phew!" remarked Roger Branscome to the boy next him. "It sure is hot. I wish I were riding on a load of wheat instead of grubbing weeds."

"So do I," was the answer. "I guess this is the toughest job in the whole lot."

"It's a heap sight harder than hauling wheat," said a sweating lad near by, who had overheard the conversation, but who had never pitched a sheaf of grain in his life. "I'll bet on that."

"I shouldn't wonder," slyly remarked Clarence Westervelt, "for I noticed that our new leader didn't pick the job for himself or any of his friends."

The vicious little remark was like a match dropped in dry grass. Conditions were right for a conflagration. More than one boy already had blisters on his hands. The hot, sandy ground seemed almost to burn the feet. The heat waves rose quivering from the earth and seemed almost to scorch the bodies of the corn hoers. Their youthful arms ached. Their backs seemed tired to the breaking point. The glaring sun made their eyes burn and their heads buzz. They had reached that point where the ordinary mortal begins to crumble under difficulties; and most of the boys in the group were ordinary. Like the men at Winchester, who, fleeing from the foe, turned back and won a victory upon the arrival of Sheridan, these lads had lost their own spirit and were ready to follow any strong soul wherever he would lead. And the strongest soul among them was Frank Anderson.

So they were like tinder to Clarence's remark. From one to another the mean insinuation passed, growing by repetition, as such things always do, until it reached the last boy in the group as the flat statement that Lem had picked the easy job for his friends and himself and saddled the hard work on the lads in the corn field. In the group were several boys of good judgment, who ordinarily would have

scorned to believe or repeat such a suggestion concerning Lem; but the combination of circumstances now swept them along with their fellows. For it was a fact that all of Lem's friends *were* either hauling wheat or working at some other task, while all of Lem's enemies were hoeing corn. So Clarence's remark found acceptance where under ordinary circumstances it would have met with disbelief. And belief led to resentment, because the remainder of the party felt that while, in view of all that Frank had attempted to do to Lem, it might have been fair enough to select Frank and his friends for this tough job, it wasn't fair to punish the rest of the party along with Frank; for so disagreeable did the work become that it was soon viewed in the light of punishment.

Now happened what always happens when persons begin to brood on their wrongs or misfortunes, either real or fancied. The misfortunes suddenly were magnified out of all proportion to their actual size. The sun's heat immediately became many times as great as it had seemed before Clarence dropped his malicious hint. The weeds suddenly increased amazingly in number and toughness. Hoes all at once grew many pounds in weight. Little blisters that their possessors usually would have joked about now seemed like deep wounds. Backs that were merely tired before, now seemed breaking. Spirit, courage, morale, had broken down.

Just as the soldiers of Italy after months of stubborn and successful struggle against all but insurmountable obstacles suddenly broke down under the insidious propaganda of the Germans, and were disastrously beaten by the very men they had for months been driving before them, so now these young soldiers of the soil suddenly lost their courage, suddenly relaxed their grip, forgot about the war, forgot that they were part of the second line of defense, forgot why they were hoeing corn, and thought only of the hardness of their task, of its difficulties, of their blistered hands and tired feet and aching backs and burning bodies. The spirit that makes an army victorious had vanished. For the time being they were a beaten regiment. They were ready to retreat in disorder. All that was needed was some one to lead them. And that some one was at hand.

But the boy who had started it all was too crafty to act prematurely. He wanted to let the virus of discontent work longer, for he realized that unless every boy in the group was sick unto death of the task in hand, any proposal to break up the camp would shock some of his fellows into their right minds again. So Frank was careful to make no suggestion and not to let his two chums make any suggestion pointing to an out-and-out desertion of the work. For it was now Frank's scheme to even up his score with his enemies at one stroke. By taking away a part of the force of boys he would

cripple the work and so hurt Mr. Henderson and the other farmers — for now Frank's hatred extended to them all — through the probable loss of a part of the crops; while, if a large number of boys left the camp in a body, he would escape the odium that would accompany desertion if he went alone. At the same time it was his purpose to have it appear that the deserters had really been driven to leave, not through any wish to quit the work, but because of the unfairness and arbitrary conduct of Lem.

Meanwhile Lem and his friends, utterly unconscious of what was afoot in the corn field, were doing Herculean labors in the wheat field. They were working to the limit of endurance, pitching and storing the heavy sheaves in the indescribably suffocating mows. They were driving themselves as a racer drives a motor-car, carefully but at top speed. They were doing good work and fast work, for, like Longfellow's ship-builder, their heart was in their art. They were storing wheat to back up the boys in Flanders and the Argonne, to help feed the starving babies of Belgium, to tide our French allies over their period of hunger. Never for a moment did they forget this great, essential fact. The very reason for their being in Mr. Henderson's wheat field at all was to serve their country and humanity. So it never occurred to one of them to grumble at the heat or mutter at the difficulties of their task. Their interest was rather in how fast they could work,

in how much they could accomplish. Their spirit, their morale was high, was exactly the opposite of that of their fellows in the corn field. And in both cases the situation was the result of leadership. Lem wanted to lead his men to victory. Anderson wanted to take his company to defeat. And each, being a strong soul, was accomplishing his purpose.

As the day wore on the heat increased. If anything, it became hotter than it had been at any time since the opening of the Liberty Camp. In the corn field the sun's ray seemed fairly to scorch the discontented wielders of the hoe. The powdered soil, stirred by feet and hoes, formed a dust that rose and choked the workers. As the sun grew hotter the murmurs of discontent increased. The little fire started by Clarence's burning words flamed hotter and hotter. At first only the driest, most tinder-like of his companions had caught fire; but now every lad in the group flamed up. The heat of the conflagration ignited all it touched. And from time to time Roger Branscome, with a cleverness that seemed hardly human, added a crackling brand of conversation, like Clarence's original remark, that not only served to keep the fire burning, but that constantly added to its intensity.

Frank, meantime, worked away like a martyr. He said little. He assented to much. He was careful to make no suggestions himself that could be construed as urging desertion. He wanted the idea to

seem to come from the others, to appear to start with the crowd. And inheriting unusual cleverness, and having learned much more by observation at home, he was able to exert an indirect influence on his fellows that seemed incredible in one of his years. Yet events at State College had amply proven his ability in that direction. Working through his immediate chums, therefore, he was able to lead his fellows where he wanted them to go, and at the same time leave them unconscious of the fact that they were being led at all.

Midday found the group of hoe wielders almost ripe for rebellion. And their discontent was not lessened when they met their fellows at dinner. For Lem's little crew, filled with satisfaction at their achievements, proud of what they had done, and burning with the desire to make a record in their work, were full of fun and spirit.

"It's easy to see that they didn't have anything very hard to do," remarked Roger Branscome to one of his fellow corn hoers. "Look at them."

The look seemed to confirm Roger's assertion. To boys as dejected as the corn hoers, such spirit as Lem's little group displayed was ample evidence that they were not working hard and that they were thoroughly enjoying themselves. The remark, as Roger had intended it should, went the rounds of the malcontents and helped to fan the flames.

It was Frank himself who craftily added the last

straw to the back-breaking burden on the corn cultivators. When his company came back to camp that night, after an afternoon that seemed even worse than the forenoon had appeared, he asked Lem, with apparent innocence how long the corn hoeing would continue.

"How much did you get done?" answered Lem.

"Perhaps an eighth of the field," said Frank, whereas really they had done a quarter.

"Then I suppose it will take a week to finish it," said Lem. "Mr. Granby's instructions were to get in the wheat and hoe that field clean before we did anything else."

Lem noticed the black looks that followed his remark. He knew that a week of corn hoeing would be almost unbearable to anybody; and he also knew that the hoers should have cleaned more than an eighth of the field in a day. He had refrained from making any criticism. Now he sought to cheer up the hoers.

"I don't think it will take all that time, though," he added, "for as soon as we get the wheat in, we'll be with you."

"How soon will that be?" asked Frank.

"We'll finish the wheat to-morrow," said Lem.

That information was all that Frank lacked to perfect his plans. If rebellion was to come, if the corn hoers were to desert, the thing must be brought about within twenty-four hours. Once Lem and

Tom Sheppard got among the corn hoers, Frank realized, the spirit of discontent would vanish, and his opportunity for revenge would be gone. He must make hay while the sun shone.

And make hay he did. No sooner had his party started work the next day and the atmosphere had again begun to grow hot, than Frank acted, though all that he did he accomplished through his confederates.

"I wonder how many of us will be alive after eight days of this," remarked Clarence Westervelt, as he paused at the end of a corn row. "I never knew fellows to work out in heat like this without getting dysentery pretty bad, even if they didn't get a direct sunstroke. Nice place to be sick this would be. I wonder how many of us will be here to see the end of it."

"Well, I won't for one," replied George Fletcher. "I'm going to quit. I can do more for Uncle Sam and earn a heap sight more money while doing it, by working in a shell plant. I don't believe half the stuff they tell about lack of food. There's plenty of food. The farmers never raised so much before. This Boys' Reserve business is just a scheme for the farmers to get cheap labor. I'm willing to work, all right, but I ain't going to let anybody make a sucker of me, and that's flat."

Other boys had stopped to listen to the conversation.

"What are you going to do?" asked Clarence.

"Do?" said George. "I'm going to quit. You just watch me."

"But what about the camp? You can't run off and leave the rest of us to do your work."

"Don't need to," said George. "We'll all go."

"It wouldn't look right," objected Clarence.

"Looks!" snorted George. "Who cares for looks? Look at the facts. It ain't my fault I'm going. It's that fathead Haskins. He can't expect us to stay if he don't give us a square deal. He put us over here to work like slaves while he and his friends ride around in wagons and have a good time. And to-morrow, I suppose, he'll come over here and boss us around and make us work harder than ever. I won't stand it, for one. Me for the square deal."

"Here, too," said another scowling lad. "Nobody's going to put anything like that over on me."

So the conflagration spread from one to another. Duty to country was forgotten. The oath of allegiance to the Working Reserve ceased to have meaning or binding force. Nothing counted now but the wrong that had been done them—a wrong that existed solely in their own minds.

So the party deserted the corn field, every boy in it having expressed his determination to leave camp at once. And sixteen of the twenty-four boys in camp were included in the group. Assuredly Frank Anderson was about to have his revenge.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CRISIS

LEM was not surprised to find the corn hoers at camp when he reached there, for Mr. Rawlins' corn field was much nearer to camp than Mr. Henderson's wheat field. He did not know, of course, that his fellows had left the corn field long before the prescribed time and that they had been in camp for an hour or more. Nor did he at once discover that fact, or notice that every boy in camp was packing his suit case.

During the afternoon a long, thin parcel had come for Lem in care of Mr. Henderson. Lem recognized the handwriting on the package as that of Captain Hardy. He believed that the package was in some way connected with the spy matter, though what it contained Lem could not imagine, for it was such an odd shaped package, resembling as it did, an umbrella box. But no matter what was in it, Lem knew that it was important for him to get the parcel open and to do so secretly. The wheat hauling was well toward completion and Lem saw that his companions could easily finish the work alone. So,

explaining to Jimmy that he had a package from Captain Hardy that he wanted to open before the others reached camp, he slipped away shortly before the usual hour and hurried back to the notch. When he saw the corn hoers, he thought that they also just arrived. They might even have stopped work a bit early because of the exhausting heat. Lem did not blame them for that. In fact, he was so engrossed in the matter in hand that he gave little thought to the presence of his comrades, but went at once to his own tent and dropped the flap.

Carefully he pried off the lid of the box. From within the wrappings of tissue-paper and excelsior Lem drew forth what looked like a metal cane with a curved handle. Astonished, Lem turned the thing over and over in his hands. Presently he noticed a small round hole in the handle. Lem was completely puzzled. What could Captain Hardy be sending him a cane for, he asked himself, when what he needed was a wireless set? Unable to fathom the mystery of the metal cane, Lem laid it down. Searching again in the box, he found what looked like a giant fountain pen. It was bluntly pointed and had a moveable cap. Also it had small round holes in it like the one in the handle of the cane. Lem was more mystified than ever. He tried to make a mark with the pen, but no ink flowed. The thing certainly looked like a pen, but Lem was certain that it could not be one. What it was he

couldn't even guess. A third package still remained in the box. Lem drew it forth and unwrapped the tissue-paper. Some insulated wires uncoiled in his hands. They were terminated with bayonet connections. Again Lem felt in the box. Nothing but some wisps of excelsior and bits of paper remained. Patiently Lem pulled to pieces all the little bunches of excelsior and all the wads of paper he had taken from the package, but they contained nothing. Whatever the thing was that had come in the box, it was complete in the two pieces with the two wires.

Lem was deeply mystified. He now believed the apparatus before him had something to do with radio communication, but had not the slightest inkling as to how it operated. He had never seen or heard of anything like it. Carefully he went through the wrappings again and this time, inside the tissue-paper from which he had drawn the cane, he found a little circular of instructions. Eagerly he read the directions.

"Extend the rod full length," they ran, "and connect it to the receiver with one of the wires. With the second wire connect the receiver with the ground. Hold the extended rod aloft in one hand and with the other place the pointed end of the receiver to the ear. Tune by sliding the moveable cap along the receiver."

With sparkling eyes Lem read the directions. Now he understood the entire apparatus. Captain

Hardy had sent him a wireless receiving outfit. The cane was the aerial. The thing that looked like a fountain pen was the receiver. He could receive but could not send messages.

Eagerly Lem turned to inspect the cane. The directions said to "extend it full length." Evidently it was some sort of an extension rod, but at first Lem was unable to see how to lengthen it. Close examination of the ferrule end of the cane showed Lem that it was composed of several sliding tubes, one within another, like a telescoping fishing-rod. Seizing the ferrule, he gave a sharp jerk and a very thin rod shot out. One by one he pulled out the joints, until his cane had reached a length of fully ten feet. He had to slant the rod diagonally across his tent in order to find room to extend it to its full length. Satisfied that he had learned all that he could about the instrument, Lem shut it together again.

"Nobody would ever guess it wasn't a cane," he said to himself as he looked admiringly at the closed aerial.

He laid the cane down on his cot and picked up the fountain pen. He found that the cap would slide back and forth on the butt end, and that the tip really was shaped to fit into the ear. Placing the instrument to his ear, Lem slid the cap back and forth on the butt, according to directions.

"I guess I know how to tune with it," he muttered. "Now let's see how to connect the thing up."

With the shorter of the two wires he connected the cane and the pen, the bayonet connections fitting snugly into the little holes in each. The second wire he fastened in the hole in the opposite side of the pen, then looked about for some way of making a ground-connection. He saw none. Taking his knife, he thrust it into the floor of the tent and wrapped the wire about it.

"Now," he muttered, "that's the way the thing goes together, but of course that doesn't make a ground-connection, for the knife is in wood. But that is the way it works, anyway."

He stood erect under the ridge of his tent, raised the cane slightly in one hand and put the pen to his ear with the other.

"Oh!" he muttered, "How I wish I dared really to try it. But I can't do that until night." Suddenly his face became thoughtful. "I wonder what the receiving radius of this outfit is?" he asked himself.

Then his face went white. He had just realized that there were no batteries with the apparatus. The thing would not work without them. Somebody had made an error. Was there still time to get the batteries? Something told Lem that matters were coming to a crisis. Would the spies finish their work before their errand could be discovered? Was it too late after all?

Greatly worried, Lem replaced the instruments in the box and slipped the box under the blankets on

his cot. The excelsior and wrapping-paper he carefully gathered together and rolled into a little ball which he could thrust into the cook-stove. What to do Lem did not know. He was certain that the wireless outfit had been sent to enable him to try to overhear any messages sent to the spies. So much was clear enough. But the outfit was incomplete. It would not work. A battery was as necessary to make it perform as a heart was to enable a man to work. Somebody had made a terrible mistake. Moreover, Lem was worried by his failure to receive any letter with the package. If Mr. Granby had meant to return promptly, he would have brought the outfit with him instead of sending it by mail. And if he did not mean to return at once, as he evidently did not mean to do, he should have written to Lem, telling him what to do. Lem felt that he must get into communication with either Captain Hardy or Mr. Granby and do so at once. But the objections to the use of either the telephone or the telegraph still existed and indeed were stronger than ever, since, if Mr. Granby's absence had been noted by the spies, a watch closer than usual would be kept on the camp. To communicate by mail would require at least forty-eight hours. And in forty-eight hours anything might happen. Indeed, Lem had a very strong and persistent feeling that something was going to happen in much less than forty-eight hours.

Again and again he asked himself what he should do. The matter was squarely up to him. In the very nature of things he must keep the situation to himself. He could not seek advice, unless it might be from Jimmy, and Jimmy was not at hand. For whatever was done Lem would be responsible. He had to shoulder the entire burden. He had to do something and do it at once.

Distracted, Lem left his tent and started up the notch. He was so worried he could no longer stay in his tent. He must find some relief in physical action. But he wanted to be alone, where he could think uninterruptedly and decide what to do. So he struck up the creek.

But he did not go far. Before he had traveled five rods he felt that something was wrong in camp. He sensed rather than saw the difficulty. There was something in the very air itself, like the condition of the atmosphere preceding a thunder-storm, that bespoke trouble. Boys were all around him, but no one spoke to him. The silence was as ominous as the hush that precedes a summer storm. Lem stopped short and looked about him. Everywhere boys were collecting their belongings, rolling up bundles, packing suit cases. A dozen boys were looking at him, scowling with the blackness of night. Yet no one said a word. The very air was tense with feeling. Amazed, dumbfounded, bewildered, Lem looked this way and that. And wherever he looked his glance was returned by a scowl.

Then down the little street between the tents Frank Anderson came striding. His face wore an ugly grin, his eyes were alight with hatred. He was looking straight at Lem.

"Is — is anything wrong?" asked Lem.

"That's a nice question for *you* to ask," said Frank, "after the way you've treated the crowd. 'Is anything wrong?' You know well enough what is wrong. But we aren't going to stand it a minute longer. We're done with you and this blasted camp. Thought you could put one over on us, didn't you? But you'll find out what's what and who's who. I told you I'd have the last laugh."

Almost speechless with astonishment, Lem stood for a moment looking straight into Frank's eyes. There he saw the ugly grin, the look of scornful elation. Intuitively it came to him that Frank had persuaded his fellows to desert. That was the meaning of the hurried packing Lem had observed. Like a flash Lem saw through the entire situation. Frank had taken advantage of the past two days to undermine his — Lem's — authority, break up the camp, and so discredit Lem in the eyes of all who knew him. Lem saw that the crisis had come. How he wished Jimmy were at hand to help him. But there was no help. Like a steel he set himself to fight the battle.

"In what way have I tried to 'put one over' on the crowd?" he asked quietly.

Frank laughed scornfully. "A nice question for you to ask," he said. "You know very well what you've done. You know very well that you and your friends have been having a picnic for the last two days while you've had the rest of us working like slaves hoeing corn. You know you mean to keep us at it for another week. You know you want to kill some of us with the heat. We know it, too. And we aren't going to stand for it. To-morrow you can hoe corn yourself — you and your friends — and see how you like it. We're going home and you can be hanged."

Around the two boys all the other lads in camp had now collected. Lem took one hasty glance at the row of faces. Not one countenance wore a friendly look. He must fight the thing out by himself.

"What makes you think we've been having a picnic while you fellows were working so hard?" he asked quietly.

"'Think' it!" exclaimed Frank. "Why, we know it."

"Have any of you fellows ever hauled in wheat and pitched it up into the mows?" asked Lem, turning to Frank's associates.

Nobody answered.

"Is there a fellow among you who is fair-minded enough to try hauling in wheat for a day before passing judgment? There must be at least one in six-

teen who is fair-minded enough to try it. You are too just a crowd to condemn a man without hearing the evidence."

Lem swept his eyes over the group again. And now one pair of eyes and then another fell before his glance. He had scored a point. His opponents were beginning to waver.

Roger Branscome saw the danger. With inhuman keenness he retorted, "If you aren't taking things easy, what are you doing in camp at this hour? We quit early because we're done with this blooming camp, and we find you here doing nothing. You thought you'd sneak off here and enjoy yourself while we fellows were blistering out in the corn field. But we caught you at it. And how do we know that any of your friends are working any harder? I'd bet a dollar they're all fishing and that you just came for your rod. I saw you open it in your tent. You thought we couldn't see you, but you forgot that your tent wall wasn't all the way down."

Poor Lem! What could he say in answer? Very evidently he had been spied upon. He could not deny Roger's assertion without explaining the entire situation. That he dared not do. He could not tell how the lads before him would receive his explanation. Most likely Frank Anderson would put the story to the test by making a search for the spies. Then all would be lost. Unless he could

explain the situation in detail, Lem saw that it was better to say nothing at all. His heart was fairly torn with anguish.

"If you fellows will suspend judgment," he said firmly, "if you will wait until Mr. Granby can return, everything will be explained."

Frank Anderson gave a derisive laugh. "What did I tell you fellows?" he said exultantly. "You see how hard he's been working. We caught him good that time. You see what he does the minute he is in charge and you know what to expect as long as he stays in charge." Then, turning to Lem, he said, with a sneer, "Good-by, Mr. Haskins. We're going to leave you. I hope you enjoy your fish."

Only by the most rigid self-repression could Lem prevent himself from striking the leering face in front of him. Hatred surged up in his heart until it almost blinded him. Never in his life had he wanted to do violence to anything as much as he now wanted to beat Frank Anderson. But he clenched his hands behind him, while his face swelled with anger and the blood beat in his veins as though it would burst them.

When he could speak calmly, he said once more, "Fellows, you know how bad circumstances looked at State College when I was accused of mistreating the horse. I assure you that circumstances are equally misleading now. Won't you wait until Mr. Granby comes before you do anything you will regret?"

“Regret!” chuckled Roger Branscome. “I suppose every slave regrets it when he gets free from his master. We’re not going to do anything we’ll regret. But we’re going to do something we’ll be glad of and we’re going to do it quick. We’re going home on the first train in the morning. If we hadn’t been so near dead from hoeing corn, we’d have climbed right over the mountain and gone home tonight. And you and your precious Liberty Camp can go hang!”

He turned away and the crowd followed him. Lem was left standing alone. Heart-broken, inconsolable, he swung about and entered his tent. As he did so he heard the exultant, malicious laugh of Frank Anderson.

CHAPTER XXVII

A MIDNIGHT VIGIL

LEM sat down on his cot and buried his face in his hands. He was almost stunned by the force of the blow that had struck him. His agony of mind was intense. At first, connected thought was difficult. His mind dwelt on one thing only—the terrible misfortune that had befallen him. All of his efforts had been in vain. His personal sacrifices had gone for nought. The trials he had endured had been worse than useless. The object of it all, the conservation of food for the army and our allies, could not now be accomplished. Daily the farm hands of the neighborhood were becoming fewer in number as industry and the draft took them away from the soil. Only the most determined and loyal efforts of every boy in the Liberty Camp could save the crops of the district—the hundreds of acres of rich food so desperately needed abroad. Even if every boy in camp did his utmost some loss was certain. But if two-thirds of the volunteers deserted, the food loss would be terrible. And two-thirds of the camp *were* going to desert.

When the power of connected thought returned to him, Lem asked himself why his fellows should charge him with responsibility for their act. In his heart Lem knew that no one in camp had worked harder, suffered more, given up more, for the cause than he had. Now to be accused of wrecking the camp and so causing this terrible loss of food was almost more than he could bear. On what ground, Lem asked himself, could his fellows make such an accusation? To Lem, fatigued almost beyond endurance by his day's labor, the charge that he had been idling while the corn hoers slaved was too preposterous to be considered. How could any sane person make such a foolish statement?

Then it came to him that perhaps no one among the corn hoers had ever hauled grain or pitched to the mows. That would explain the situation, for assuredly the work did look easy. But the reason, if reason it were, did not satisfy Lem. What, he asked himself, had he done that would cause his fellows to give or accept such a foolish reason for so desperate a move as they were about to make?

Step by step he reviewed the entire course of their life at camp. He had done nothing, so far as he could see, to change the feelings of his fellows toward himself since the camp was opened. When the squad left State College he was esteemed, respected, looked up to as a leader of integrity, and trusted because he had shown constancy in adversity and kept

faith under misrepresentation. And now he was regarded almost as a traitor to the very cause for which he had given so much, as a leader without fairness, as a tyrant with whom further association was impossible. What had he done, what had happened, to bring about such a change?

Suddenly Lem saw the reason. In his agony of mind he almost sobbed. He *was* guilty, though not in the way charged. He was guilty because he had used poor judgment. He had been a fool — and a fool can do more harm than a knave, as Lem now realized. He had been short-sighted. If he had done his full duty, Frank Anderson would have been hauling wheat instead of Charley Russell. Then Frank could never have made the absurd charges he had made, and he would not have had the opportunity to poison the minds of his fellows against Lem. In short, Lem now believed that if he had done what he knew he ought to do, the present situation would never have occurred.

In self-defense Lem pleaded with himself that he had been kind to Frank, that he had tried to treat him generously, that he had endeavored to return good for evil. But excuse himself as he would, Lem was now tortured with the thought that his conduct had been dictated less by generosity to Frank than selfishness for himself. The real reason he had sent Frank to hoe corn instead of haul wheat, he told himself, was because he dreaded unfavorable comment

by his fellows, because he feared he would be accused of "rubbing it in." It wasn't Frank at all that he had considered, Lem told himself, but his own feelings. He hadn't had the moral courage to do his full duty — that was all. And this was the result of it.

In so believing Lem was unjust to himself. He *had* been short-sighted. Yet the case was not as bad as Lem now made it appear. But anguish weighed upon him so heavily that he could hardly think correctly about anything.

For a time Lem gave way to remorse. Then he pulled himself together and tried to think what he ought to do, to discover how it might be possible to retrieve the situation. But he could see no way. His fellows had made up their minds and declared themselves, and no words of his would change their purpose.

But might there not be some deed, Lem asked himself, that would save the day? Was there anything he could do? What could he do?

Above all things he must get into touch with Mr. Granby and Captain Hardy. He must do so by mail. At least he could write a letter. So Lem tried to compose himself and write the necessary communication.

That done, he pondered on the problem of securing an early delivery for it. If the letter were posted in Mr. Henderson's mail-box, it would not be col-

lected until the rural carrier came next morning. It would not finally be aboard a train, speeding to its destination, until late afternoon or early evening. A few miles up the railroad was a water-tank at a signal-tower where the midnight mail train stopped to take on water. If he could get the letter to the signal-man, the latter would put it aboard the train for him, and the letter would be in New York by the time the rural carrier reached Mr. Henderson's farm. Twenty-four hours could thus be saved in its delivery. The thing to do was obviously to get the letter to the signal-man.

Though tired to the point of exhaustion, Lem started off to the signal-tower without hesitation. It meant a walk of at least eight miles there and back. But Lem locked his jaws, a look of determination succeeded the expression of despair on his face, and off he set. He could not see how his letter would help in any way. But just the same he was determined to carry on to the very end. So off he trudged, wearily dragging one foot after the other.

While he was gone his comrades assembled for supper. Lem's friends knew nothing of what had occurred and Anderson, fearful of the influence of Tom Sheppard and Jimmy Donnelly, cautioned his confederates to say nothing concerning what was afoot. In consequence the meal was an odd one. The very air was tense with feeling. But inasmuch as Frank's party kept their counsel and refrained

from making hostile remarks, Lem's followers could only wonder at what had happened. For, with Lem gone and the Anderson crowd glum and silent, it was evident that something unusual had occurred. So the meal was eaten in a silence that was almost icy, while every one at the big table cast furtive glances at every one else.

Meantime Lem wearily dragged himself toward the watering place. And all the while he kept thinking, thinking, thinking over what he should do. But think as he would, Lem saw no ray of hope, no relieving feature in the situation. He could think of nothing that would turn the tide. He could see nothing to do but carry on — go on to the very end, doing each duty thoroughly.

At the thought of the wireless receiving instrument Lem's heart cried out. If only some one hadn't blundered, if only the battery had not been forgotten, Lem could have gone on with the spy hunt. That was something tangible that he could have accomplished. Even though the camp did break up, the spies yet remained to be thwarted. He might even have caught some message that would have altered the entire situation. Who knew? But now it was useless. In utter despair, Lem almost gave up. What was the use of trying to do right, he asked himself, when everything he attempted went wrong?

When he got back to camp it was dark. Dread-

ing to encounter any of the Anderson crowd, Lem came quietly up the notch and slipped into his tent unobserved. He wanted to talk with Jimmy, but Jimmy was not visible and Lem did not go hunting for him. Instead he sat down on his cot to think.

Under him he felt the box with the wireless set. Sadly he drew the box from under the blanket. Slowly he opened it and with regretful eyes looked at the instruments inside. He was about to replace the box when a sudden thought arrested his hand. How did he know that the instrument wasn't complete? He *didn't* know. He had never seen a wireless instrument like this. It might contain a tiny battery in the giant fountain pen. It was a possibility. Why had he never thought of that before?

A light sprang into Lem's eyes. Despair faded from his face. He jumped to his feet and began to rummage in his suit case. Quickly he drew forth and thrust into his pocket his flashlight, a paper pad, and a lead pencil. Then he put the big fountain pen and the two insulated wires into his pocket, and partly concealing the cane with his sweater, which he flung over his arm, he slipped from his tent and vanished in the darkness.

Rapidly he made his way to the creek bed stones on which he and Jimmy had crossed the stream the night they discovered the cave of the spies. The creek was shrunk again to its normal summer size. In the clear starlight the rocks loomed black and

huge against the steely waters of the creek. From stone to stone Lem leaped lightly, crossing dry-shod. Then he picked his way cautiously along the path to the spring. Fearful lest one of the spies might be abroad, he dared not use his light. In the deep gloom of the forest he slipped and stumbled, narrowly missing more than one fall. But gradually his eyes became accustomed to the obscurity and he was able to climb with more certainty and less noise. Remembering that the spies drew their water at night, he paused as he neared the spring, and approached the place with the utmost caution. Nothing stirred. No sound was audible save the nocturnal whisperings of the wind in the tree tops, the rustling of tiny forest creatures, and the hum of insects. Finding no one at the spring, he pressed on until he came to the ring of boulders just within the strip of forest that bordered the great rock pile, where he had hidden on the occasion of his scout with Jimmy.

Once he had worked his way to the centre of this ring, Lem gave a sigh of relief. Though by no means so secure as the cave in the stone patch, this was a very effective hiding-place. So close together were the encircling rocks and trees that there was small chance of his being discovered, even if he used his light. At the same time he was near enough to the stone pile to hear the footsteps of any one crossing it. And certainly, if his apparatus would operate

at all, it would operate over the short distance that separated him from the spies' aerial. But would it operate? That was the question that was troubling Lem.

At the earliest possible moment he meant to find out. His flashlight, pencil, and pad he placed on the ground, together with his pocket-knife. Then he extended his rod to its maximum length, coupled it up with the receiver, connected that with his knife, and thrust the blade of the latter deep into the ground. Then, all a-tremble with eagerness, he raised his aerial aloft, placed the receiver to his ear, and stood tense and motionless.

A minute, ten minutes, half an hour, Lem waited anxiously. No crackle of electricity, no whine of a wireless message, sounded in his ear. From time to time he moved the cap back and forth on the receiver, trying to tune to different wave lengths in the hope of catching some vibration. Nothing whatever happened. The only sound that came to him was the gentle sighing of the night wind in the foliage over his head. Slowly hope departed. Gradually despair took its place. At the end of an hour Lem let his rod drop to the ground, and bending over one of the encircling boulders, buried his face in his hands. He had found the answer to his question. The radio outfit would not work. His chance to accomplish anything was gone. His every effort had been in vain.

Bitter, black thoughts chased one another through Lem's burdened mind. Had he been of less courageous stuff he would have broken down entirely and wept. But Lem was not the crying kind. For a time all seemed ended. There was nothing more he could do. He had done his best and failed.

As he leaned on the rock, broken-hearted, utterly dejected, his hope gone and his spirit all but crushed, he thought of the words of Marshal Foch: "An army is never beaten until it admits it is beaten." Like a flash Lem straightened up. His fists clenched. His jaws came together like a steel trap. He did not, he *would* not, admit that he was beaten. Therefore he *wasn't* beaten. Until Anderson and his followers had actually left camp and boarded the train, there was still hope. Something might yet happen to save the day if only he would carry on. Wellington won at Waterloo by holding out until Blücher arrived. He, too, would hold out; he, too, would carry on to the end.

His wireless might yet speak. He picked up the rod and readjusted the receiver to his ear. Then, through the long, silent hours he listened. When his arms were so weary he could no longer hold his aerial aloft, he propped it up against a rock, while he himself sat on a sweater with his back against a boulder, and his knees drawn up before him. Hour followed hour. Sleepiness came and Lem fought it. The chill of the night fog descended upon him. He

pulled on his sweater, buttoned up his coat, and shivered. Hunger gripped him. In his anguish he had remembered neither to eat supper nor bring a supply of sandwiches. Cold, hungry, tired, utterly dejected, he still refused to give up hope or end the struggle.

Slowly the moments dragged by. To Lem an hour seemed like a day. As time passed, it seemed to him that he had never done anything in his life but sit shivering in the dark, listening for a wireless signal. It seemed as though he never *would* do anything else. The night seemed as endless as eternity. At times he pinched himself to keep awake. At times he stood up and stamped his feet on the forest loam. When one arm grew weary of holding the receiver, he switched to the other. All about him he heard the stirrings of woodland creatures, now become accustomed to his presence. Little woodmice scampered lightly across the leaves. Owls gave their wavering, eerie cry overhead. The tree tops sighed under the gentle touch of the night wind. Somewhere a skunk passed by, scenting the air behind him. So the hours dragged, with hope slowly fading, despite Lem's grim determination to hope against hope.

Then suddenly something galvanized him into life and action. The fountain pen in his ear began to crackle. Like a flash Lem turned on his electric torch and laid it so that its rays fell on the pad be-

side him. Then with his free hand he slid the cap back and forth on the butt end of his fountain pen receiver. The crackling continued. Now it was confused and indistinct, now louder. Then Lem got his adjustment perfect. With joy he caught the vibrations clearly. Somebody was sending a signal. The call was very faint yet distinct. Then the crackling ceased and Lem hardly breathed as he waited in tense silence for something more.

Promptly it came. With a crackle that almost split his ear-drum, a second wireless signal vibrated in his receiver. Lem almost shouted aloud for joy. The ear-splitting noise told him as plainly as words could have told him, that the transmitting instrument was close at hand. Lem never doubted that the sound came from the aerial in the skidway, and that the spies in the cave were flashing an answer to the signal of their confederates. Three brief, sharp letters, rapidly repeated, confirmed Lem's belief. Some one had called, and the spies had answered. Now for the message.

With pencil poised above his paper, Lem waited. Promptly came the faint buzzing sound he had heard first, barely audible yet distinct. The letters fairly tumbled over one another, so rapidly did the operator transmit them. With equal rapidity Lem's pencil moved over his paper, under the rays of his flashlight. As suddenly as it had begun, the message ended. The vibrations in Lem's ear ceased.

Rigid he sat and silent, listening tensely for some reply, but none came.

A minute passed. Five minutes went by. At the end of fifteen minutes Lem disconnected his instruments, telescoped his aerial, thrust paper, pencil, and the small wireless parts into his pocket, and with his cane in one hand and his flashlight in the other, went swiftly down the mountain.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A STRUGGLE WITH TEMPTATION

WITHOUT mishap Lem crossed the creek and hurried back to camp. He found it wrapped in silent darkness. Finally he entered his tent, closed the flap, and made certain the walls were entirely lowered. His tent mate, Jimmy, was sleeping like a log, thoroughly exhausted by the day's labor. A regiment of calvary could have ridden by and not aroused him. Lighting a candle and carefully shading it so no ray would fall on Jimmy's face, Lem sat down on his cot, put his suit case on his knees, and placed on it the paper on which he had recorded the wireless message.

This is what he had written down: O-U-R-C-A-P-A-C-I-T-Y-H-U-G-E-Q-U-A-L-I-T-Y-A-N-D-Q-U-A-N-T-I-T-Y-B-O-T-H-G-U-A-R-A-N-T-E-E-D-P-R-O-D-U-C-T-S-C-A-N-B-E-R-E-A-D-Y-F-O-R-Y-O-U-R-S-H-I-P-M-E-N-T-D-A-Y-A-F-T-E-R-T-O-M-O-R-R-O-W-W-E-W-I-L-L-W-A-T-C-H-Q-U-A-L-I-T-Y-P-A-R-T-I-C-U-L-A-R-L-Y-S-O-U-T-H-S-I-D-I-N-G-B-E-S-T-E-N-T-R-A-N-C-E-T-O-W-O-R-K-S-W-I-L-L-T-R-Y-N-O-T-B-E-V-E-R-Y-L-O-N-G-

A-B-S-E-N-T-N-E-C-E-S-S-A-R-Y-S-E-N-D-F-R-O-M-H-E-R-E-B-Y-P-O-S-T-F-O-U-R-O-R-F-I-V-E-M-O-R-E-S-A-M-P-L-E-S-T-O-M-O-R-R-O-W-A-R-R-I-V-E-N-E-X-T-M-O-R-N-I-N-G-Y-O-U-M-U-S-T-A-C-T-O-N-O-F-F-E-R-T-H-E-N-

Lem looked at the long string of letters and frowned. So rapidly had the message sounded in his ear that Lem did not know whether he had merely a string of letters or a message of the usual sort. He had had to record the letters so rapidly that he had not endeavored to fashion them into words as they came to him. Perhaps they formed words and perhaps not. If they did, he doubtless had a code message. If he had merely a jumble of letters, then he must deal with a cipher. With ciphers he had had no experience. His sole acquaintance with code messages was what he had had at Camp Brady when the Wireless Patrol unraveled the message of the dynamiters. But he had read something about both systems of cryptic communication.

So intense was his attention that Lem scarcely breathed as he bent over his suit case and tried to puzzle out the message. Naturally his first effort was to try to form the letters into words. "Our" he spelled out, and smiled as he wrote down the word "our." Again he spelled out a word and wrote down "cap." But what followed puzzled him. It ran "a city hug equality." The frown came back to Lem's face. What could be the meaning of such a

senseless message as "our cap a city hug equality," he asked himself, and how was he to make sense of it? He read the message over several times. Then a smile broke over his face. He scratched out what he had written and substituted, "Our capacity huge." That one sentence determined the nature of the communication. It was doubtless a straightforward message that carried some hidden meaning. Rapidly now Lem puzzled out its component sentences, writing them down one after another. In a very short time he had reduced the string of letters to an orderly message, which read thus: "Our capacity huge. Quality and quantity both guaranteed. Products can be ready for your shipment day after to-morrow. We will watch quality particularly. South siding best entrance to works. Will try not be very long absent. Necessary send from here by post four or five more samples to-morrow. Arrive next morning. You must act on offer then."

The frown on Lem's face deepened to a scowl. Beyond doubt the message before him was anything but the harmless business message it appeared to be. What did it really mean and how was Lem to find out? If arbitrary meanings had been given to the different words, he never could find out. If the words retained their proper meanings, then the message could be deciphered by altering the positions of the words or by eliminating certain words

from the message and retaining certain others. But how to set about solving the problem Lem hardly knew. His sole experience with cryptic communications was with the spy messages intercepted at Camp Brady. Their meaning had been found by reading every third word in the messages.

"I'll try that plan now," Lem muttered to himself. "If I get no sense by taking every third word, I'll try every second word, then every fourth word, and so on."

Quickly he wrote down every third word in the message, thus: "Huge quantity products ready shipment to-morrow watch south entrance will be absent from post five to-morrow morning act then."

As Lem ran his eye over the words, he almost shouted aloud. An exultant light shone in his eyes. His heart beat fast.

"I've got it!" he muttered to himself. "I've got it! This must be part of the same gang that tried to blow up the Elk City reservoir, for they use the same code system."

Then quickly he punctuated the message, which read as follows: "Huge quantity products ready shipment to-morrow. Watch south entrance. Will be absent from post five to-morrow morning. Act then."

A little cry of triumph broke from Lem's lips. "That means they are going to blow up a shipment of ammunition at the south entrance of the Ander-

son shell plant at five o'clock to-morrow morning," he muttered.

Into his mind came a mental vision of the south entrance of the Anderson factory. He could see the wide gate and the swarms of workers hurrying in and out.

"What an awful place for an explosion," muttered Lem with a shudder. "It will kill scores of people."

In his mind's eye he could see the dead and mangled lying on the ground, the uninjured fleeing in panic from the spot, the buildings beginning to burn, and explosion following explosion. Suddenly his train of thought was interrupted with a jolt. Ammunition shipments, he knew, always went by rail, and there was no track running out of the south entrance. He must have misread the message.

Lem picked up the paper before him and once more began to study what he had written.

"It makes sense," he muttered, "but the sense doesn't correspond with facts."

Over and over he read the message, but for a long time he saw no light. Then it came to him like a flash. The word "watch" was a noun. He had made it a verb. In the light of this discovery he rewrote the message, this time filling in the implied words so as to make complete sense. And now he did cry out in triumph. Beyond question he had solved the riddle. For this is what he wrote: "A

huge quantity of products is ready for shipment to-morrow. The watch at the south entrance will be absent from his post at five to-morrow morning. Act then."

Now it was all as plain as daylight. Confederates of the spies on the mountain knew that a large shipment of ammunition was ready to go forward. They had corrupted the guard at the south gate, so that their accomplices could slip in and wreck the plant. Under the daylight saving law five o'clock was really four o'clock. It would not be light. The spies could enter unobserved, place explosives, lay a fuse, and get away in safety.

And now Lem understood why these men were hidden on the mountain. They meant not only to blow up the shell plant, but also to destroy the greatest quantity of ammunition possible. Hence they had to strike their blow at a time when large quantities of products were ready for shipment. They did not dare wait and watch in Central City because all strangers were closely observed, and if they awakened suspicion their boarding places were quietly searched. By living on the mountain the spies were within little more than an hour's walk of the shell plant, and they could keep with them any quantity of explosives they might desire. Thus, at an hour's warning, they were always ready to strike. Confederates in the town, perhaps employees of the shell plant itself, had gained the informa-

tion about the munitions to go forward on the morrow and had corrupted the watchman at the gate. It was all as plain as could be.

The word "corrupted" stuck in Lem's mind. Had not Frank Anderson, through Corporal Worthington, corrupted the little lads at State College with the view to ruining him, Lem? Now the same method was being employed to ruin Frank, or rather Frank's father. To Lem it was pretty much the same thing.

"Assuredly," thought Lem, "chickens do come home to roost. I wonder if the fellow who does right is rewarded in similar fashion."

Suddenly all the pent up anger he had ever felt toward Frank Anderson burst forth in Lem's heart. The greatest temptation of his life came to him. He alone possessed knowledge of the plot against the Anderson shell plant. Why should he exert himself to save the property of his worst enemy? Why should he be sacrificing sleep and risking danger for the very lad who had so persistently and treacherously tried to harm him? Why should he be doing his utmost to protect the father of the boy who had tried to disgrace and ruin him? On the morrow Anderson and his crowd were going to desert. The camp would break up. Mr. Granby would come back to find his plans wrecked. All through the state would go the word that the Liberty Camp near Central City had broken up because of the mismanagement of Lieutenant Has-

kins. All the blame would be placed at Lem's door. The sixteen lads who were going to desert would spread the story broadcast. To justify themselves they had to paint a very black picture of Lem. It looked like sure disgrace for Lem.

Now it was within his power to ruin the lad who was responsible for all his injuries. Revenge was within his grasp. Lem alone possessed knowledge of the plot against the Anderson shell plant. Nobody knew that Lem possessed these facts. All he need do was to hold his peace and let things take their course. Then the boy who had tried to ruin others by corruption would find himself ruined in the same way. Was that not justice?

Sitting on his cot in the dim candle-light, Lem fought a second silent battle with himself in the stillness of the night. Irresolute, he wavered between duty and desire. Over and over he reviewed the situation. Conscience told him to make haste and save the shell plant. Hatred told him to remain quiet and let it be destroyed. So the struggle continued in the silent darkness until Lem chanced to look at his watch. It was two o'clock in the morning! Perhaps it was now too late. Perhaps he could not now save the plant if he tried.

With a cry Lem crushed down the temptation in his heart and burst from his tent. Down the notch he ran like a deer. Fatigue was forgotten. On he raced until he reached Mr. Henderson's door. He

pounded on it until he roused the sleepy farmer.

"Come down quick," he called. "Something terrible has happened."

Five minutes later the two were racing for Central City in Mr. Henderson's motor-car, while Lem explained the entire situation. Incredulous, Mr. Henderson listened to the story. At four o'clock the car drew up before Mr. Anderson's home. Ten minutes later Mr. Anderson joined Lem and Mr. Henderson and the three sped to the office of the shell plant police. Detectives were summoned and ordered to conceal themselves near the south gate, where they could watch the guard and apprehend any one who approached. They were ordered, if necessary, to shoot first and ask questions afterward. Lem's information had come not a moment too soon, but it had come in time. The shell plant was safe.

CHAPTER XXIX

VICTORY

BACK to camp sped the Henderson motor-car the minute the great shell plant was safe. But the Lem who rode in it now was a different lad from the Lem who had kept the lone vigil on the mountain. Action had roused all his powers. Success had stimulated him to still greater efforts. He had saved the shell plant. He had prevented the loss of huge quantities of munitions. Thereby he had saved innocent women and children from the beast of Europe and helped to protect the boys in the trenches. He had done a great thing. But there were other things still to be accomplished, other work was yet to be performed. He had saved the shell supply. Now he meant to save the food supply. And he saw exactly how he was going to do it.

Under his urgent plea, Mr. Henderson drove his car at the limit of safety. As they shot through the chill morning mist, Lem sat deep in thought, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, hardly moving. He was mapping out his campaign. He did not intend to

be caught unprepared at a single point. The great essential was to get there in time and the car was doing it.

The camp was no more than astir when Lem dashed up the notch. Not half a dozen lads had yet emerged from their tents. Lem gave a sigh of relief. He was in time.

Directly he strode to Frank's tent and called, "Anderson! Anderson!"

Frank thrust his head, his eyes still heavy with sleep, out of his tent door. The sleepy expression vanished when he saw who his visitor was, and a look of cold scorn took its place. "Well?" he said.

"Come to my tent with me," replied Lem.

Something in his tone and manner made Anderson choke back the insolent reply that trembled on his lips. Without a word he stepped forth and accompanied Lem. Neither spoke a word as they strode over to Lem's tent. Jimmy was not there. They entered and Lem dropped the fly.

"Sit down," he said courteously, motioning toward his cot which had not been slept in.

Frank took the proffered seat and Lem dropped down on Jimmy's disheveled bed, facing him. For a moment there was silence. The old sneering look began to creep back into Frank's face. Lem saw it.

"Anderson," he said quietly, "I want you to look at this 'fishing rod' that your friend Roger yesterday accused me of coming back to camp to get when I should have been hauling wheat."

He picked up the cane and handed it to Frank. From his pocket he drew forth the fountain pen receiver and the insulated wires. These he also handed to Frank.

"There it is complete," he said.

Anderson examined the outfit in silent interest.

"It telescopes this way," said Lem, drawing out the topmost section of the aerial.

Anderson completed the extension of the rod, then examined it critically. Quite evidently he was puzzled.

"This wire slips in there," said Lem, thrusting a bayonet connection into the butt of the cane, "and the other end connects with the fountain pen—thus. This second wire goes into the opposite side of the fountain pen and runs to the ground. Ever see a fishing outfit like it?"

Anderson looked at Lem with bewilderment written on his face. "No," he said. "What is it? This is no fishing-rod."

"Correct. It is a radio receiving outfit. I got it to try to save your father's mills from destruction."

The expression on Frank Anderson's face was indescribable. His cheeks went white. He sprang to his feet. "'My father's mills,'" he cried. "What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I said — destruction at the hands of alien enemy dynamiters. There is a plot afoot to blow them up."

“ ‘Blow them up,’ ” repeated Frank aghast. “Why, that would ruin him. Every cent he has in the world is invested in those mills and he borrowed hundreds of thousands additional to expand them for war work. The insurance covers only a fraction of their cost. If they were blown up, we’d be ruined, we’d be worse than penniless.” He took a quick step toward Lem and laid a trembling hand appealingly on his shoulder. “For heaven’s sake,” he said, “tell me what you know quick.”

“Sit down,” said Lem. “It’s a long story.” He paused and stared into vacancy as though collecting his thoughts. “Anderson,” he said at length, “the day after you and Clarence and Roger hatched a certain little scheme under the willow-trees by Mr. Henderson’s wheat field, I went for a walk in the rain to think the situation over.”

Anderson’s look fell to the floor and his cheek turned scarlet.

“I crossed the creek and went up the old skidway where the fellows saw some surveyors running a telephone-line for Uncle Sam. I made a discovery. That line wasn’t a telephone-line at all, but a camouflaged wireless aerial, with an underground transmission line running toward that great stone heap on the mountain-side.”

Anderson raised his eyes. Now they expressed the incredulity he felt.

“It’s a fact,” continued Lem, “and the trans-

mission line led to a cave in a ledge of rocks in the very heart of that stone pile. I know because Jimmy and I went scouting one dark night and traced it."

"At night? Over those stones and among the rattlers?"

"Exactly. And just missed being bitten by one."

Anderson leaned far forward. "What did you find in the cave?" he demanded eagerly.

"Four spies, presumably Germans. Also they were there presumably to work harm to your father's shell plant."

Frank jumped to his feet. "I must telephone my father at once," he said excitedly.

"Sit down," said Lem. "I haven't told you half yet."

"But my father should be warned at once," cried Frank in alarm. "They might blow up the place while we talk."

"How are you going to warn him," asked Lem coldly, "unless you know what to warn him about? Sit down."

Frank sank back on the cot. "Go on," he said, "but be quick."

"We told Mr. Granby about it. He ordered us not to mention it to any one else lest the whole camp go spy hunting and alarm the men on the mountain. Then he wrote to Captain Hardy to see what we ought to do about the matter. He sent for Mr.

Granby to come to New York, where he is now." Lem paused a moment. "Yesterday," he continued, "a package came for me from Captain Hardy. I believed the package had some connection with this spy matter, and slipped back to camp early to open it before any one else got here. You fellows quit work early and caught me. You thought I was after a fishing rod. The apparatus in your hand is what I had. It's a wireless receiving outfit. I couldn't explain without giving the whole situation away. If I had explained, you fellows would have swarmed up the mountain and spoiled everything. So I had to let you think what you chose to think. But it was not a fishing rod that I had. It was the thing in your hand."

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Frank eagerly.

"Nothing," said Lem.

"Nothing," echoed Frank indignantly. "Why, you might find out something about the plans of these spies."

"I already have," said Lem. "I spent the night on the mountain, listening for any message they might send or receive."

"All alone," said Frank, "and up among the rocks and snakes?"

"Yes, alone and quite close to the rocks and rattlers."

"Did you hear anything?"

"I did. The Anderson shell plant is to be blown up this morning."

Frank sprang to his feet. "I must warn my father this minute," he cried. His voice was all a-tremble.

"It is too late," said Lem quietly.

The expression on Frank's face was pitiful. "Do you mean —" he began, but the words ended in a sob.

"Here is their message," said Lem, handing Frank the sheet of paper on which he had written down the long string of letters, "and here's what it says when deciphered." He passed over the message as he had finally written it down. "It took me a long time to work it out," he continued.

With panic-stricken eyes Frank glanced at the message. "At five o'clock!" he read. "Act then." Aloud, he said in a choking voice, "Did you — did you — hear it?"

"No," said Lem, "for it didn't happen. I went to Central City myself and warned your father. By this time the spies are in jail. The shell plant is all right and your father's fortune is safe."

Anderson sank back on Lem's cot like one stricken. He was almost as much shocked as he would have been had Lem told him he had heard the explosion. The tension had been great. The reaction was equally severe. He rested his elbow on his knees. His shoulders sank forward. His head drooped.

For a long time he sat motionless, saying nothing. Finally he looked up.

"Was anybody with you," he asked, "when you discovered that the telephone-line was really a blind for a wireless aerial?"

"I was alone."

"Did you know then that the men who put up the wireless were concerned in a plot against my father's shell plant?"

"I suspected as much."

"Then you made your night scout among the rocks and the rattlers expressly to save the shell plant?"

"Of course."

"Did you know then what — what we had planned under the willows?"

"Yes."

"And you spent last night on the mountain, going without sleep after a hard day's work and again risking a snake-bite, to save my father's factory — after what happened yesterday?"

"Yes," said Lem very gently.

Again Anderson was silent, thinking intently, his head bowed. "Haskins," he said at last, "I can't understand it. If I'd been in your place, and you had treated me as I have treated you, the shell plant could have gone to thunder. I'd never have turned a finger to save it, let alone have done what you have. How could you forget all the rotten

things I've done to you and not want to get even?"

"Who said I did?"

"You mean you wanted the shell plant to be blown up so I would be hurt, and yet you saved it?"

"I guess that's about the size of it. I'm not a bit better than anybody else. I *was* tempted to let it be destroyed."

"Then why didn't you?"

"Because our army needs those shells. I'd be a pretty patriot, wouldn't I, if I put a private quarrel before the welfare of the U. S. A.? And I was just little enough to want to do it, too."

"Haskins," said Anderson, after a silence, "you needn't call yourself little. You're the biggest, whitest fellow I ever knew. I never looked at things as I do now. I never before saw myself as I do now. Haskins, I've been nastier than any skunk that ever walked. But I'll tell you one thing. If you'll let me shake your hand; if you're still willing to let bygones be bygones as you once wanted to do; if you'll just give me a chance to show how sorry I am for all the rotten things I've done to you, I'll be the most grateful fellow alive."

"What will you do?" asked Lem.

"What do you want done?"

"I want to get these crops in. I want to save all this food for the boys in France. That's what we joined the Working Reserve for. That's what I'd rather accomplish than anything else on earth."

"Then shake. If any lobster in the bunch says another word about breaking up this camp or loafing on the job, he's got me to reckon with. We'll get in the crops and we'll save every last ounce of food or know the reason why."

He thrust out his hand and looked Lem fairly in the eyes. The old expression of hatred was gone forever. In its place was a look of admiration and loyalty.

Lem seized the proffered hand. "Frank," he said, "I'm the happiest fellow alive. If you'll help me, we'll clean up the crops so slick a crow couldn't live on what's left."

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